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**Cosmic Justice in al-Frb's Virtuous City  
Healing the Medieval Body Politic.**

El Fekkak, Badr

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**Cosmic Justice in al-Fārābī's Virtuous City:**  
*Healing the Medieval Body Politic.*

**Badr El Fekkak**

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
at King's College, University of London

July 2012

## Abstract:

This dissertation argues that, far from being incidental to al-Fārābī's political theory, the structural correspondence between the corporeal, cosmic and civil realms, constitutes one of its central tenets. The first chapter demonstrates that, according to al-Fārābī, the universe displays a clear hierarchical organization (*tartīb*). Each one of its elements, whether material or immaterial, receives an allotted share (*qusṭa*) of existence (*wujūd*), which reflects its ontological merit (*isti'hāl*). As a result, each being in the celestial and sublunary realms, is fairly endowed with a proper rank (*rutba*) and a given function: Some elements have a serving role (*khidma*), while others occupy a leading position (*ri'āsa*). The second chapter shows that the effects of this cosmic justice lead to a stratified structure in the human body. Indeed, according to al-Fārābī's strictly cardiocentric physiology, the heart rules over and directs all other subservient corporeal organs. These are, in order of importance; the brain, liver, lungs, stomach, spleen, intestines and genitalia. The third chapter examines how the structure and institutions of the virtuous city (*al-madīna al-fāḍila*) exhibit a similar hierarchy. The ideal sovereign ranks the polity's various inhabitants in accordance with their innate or providentially endowed dispositions and acquired merit (*isti'hāl*). As a result, the most gifted citizens occupy ruling positions, whereas the less talented members of the city are assigned a number of subordinate roles and functions. The closing chapter explores how al-Fārābī frames his influential definition of civil science (*'ilm al-madani*) by appealing to this structural analogy. Thus, he describes the virtuous kingly craft (*mihna malikiyya fāḍila*) in medical terms by comparing the physician's ability to heal bodies with the supreme ruler's capacity to govern virtuous cities. Crucially, this allows al-Fārābī to put forward a justification of legitimate political authority based exclusively on an agent's expertise in the virtuous kingly craft, irrespective of any other external factor or condition.

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## Introduction:

### Divine Providence, Hierarchy and Medicine

“La Providence divine n'est pas un trouble, une anomalie dans l'ordre du monde. C'est l'ordre du monde lui-même. Ou plutôt c'est le principe ordonnateur de cet univers. C'est la Sagesse éternelle, unique, étendue à travers tout l'univers en un réseau souverain de relations.”

Simone Weil, L'Enracinement (1949)

This dissertation examines one of the central aspirations of al-Fārābī's political philosophy; the aspiration to show that there exists an important and intimate relationship between the cosmic, corporeal and political order (*nizām*). Indeed, al-Fārābī emphasises in most of his treatises that touch on the subject of civil science (*‘ilm al-madani*) the fundamental nature of this connection. Thus, he speaks in these terms in the *Tahṣīl al-Sa‘āda*, announcing that the association of citizens in a city resembles the arrangement of the various parts of the universe<sup>1</sup>. In his *Fuṣūl Muntaza‘a* and *Kitāb al-Milla*, al-Fārābī repeats this assertion and adds that the organization of the city and cosmos also reflects the structure of human physiology<sup>2</sup>. Hence in aphorism twenty-five, different organs are said to cooperate and promote bodily health in the same way that citizens mutually assist each other to insure their political and ethical flourishing. Similarly, al-Fārābī's biological writings show equal enthusiasm for this parallel. For instance, in his *Risāla fī A‘dā’ al-Ḥayawān* he reiterates the belief that the ideal political order tallies with the physiological and cosmic structures<sup>3</sup>. Finally, this image is vividly present in al-Fārābī's *magnum opus* the *Arā’ Ahl*

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<sup>1</sup> Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Kitāb Tahṣīl al-Sa‘āda*, in *Al-Fārābī: al-‘A‘māl al-Falsafiyya*, ed. J. al-Yāsīn, Dār al-Manāhil, Beirut 1992, pp. 119-197.

<sup>2</sup> Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Fuṣūl muntaza‘a*, ed. F. Najjār, Dār al-Mashriq, Beirut 1993, pp. 91-92.

<sup>3</sup> Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Risāla fī a‘dā’ al-ḥayawān* in *Traité Philosophiques: Al-Kindī, Al-Fārābī, Ibn Bajjah, Ibn ‘Addy*, ed. A. Badawi, Publication de L'Université de Libye, Benghazi 1973, pp. 65-115.

*al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*; there he explains that the heart, king and first cause play equivalent roles within the body, virtuous city and universe<sup>4</sup>.

By focusing on the pervasive use of this analogy, I hope to significantly alter the current approach to al-Fārābī's political philosophy. This well-entrenched interpretative attitude tends to read the Farabian contribution to civil science in complete isolation from his biological and cosmological output. In fact, according to its leading exponent, al-Fārābī's entire philosophical *opera* can be neatly divided into a set of privileged sources that contain the Second Master's authentic teachings and a group of more accessible works that present a rhetorically palatable and edulcorated version of his insight<sup>5</sup>. An unwelcome result of this methodological distinction is that the biological, metaphysical and cosmological parts of the Farabian corpus are unreservedly devalued and neglected in favour of the more straightforwardly political sections.

Thus, Muhsin Mahdī claims that the early chapters of the *Ārā' ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila* and the *Siyāsa al-Madaniyya* serve an essentially persuasive function and hold no scientific value of any sort. In his opinion, al-Fārābī chooses to open his inquiry in this manner because it is on the whole more convincing to start a work of prescriptive political analysis by framing its social recommendations in pseudo-metaphysical and biological terms<sup>6</sup>. As such, al-Fārābī's careful presentation of a hierarchical cosmic order as

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<sup>4</sup> Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *On the Perfect State: Mabādi' Ārā' ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, ed. R. Walzer, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1985, pp. 234-237.

<sup>5</sup> The *locus classicus* of this line of interpretation is found in the introduction of Muhsin Mahdī's revised edition of *Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, which has been recently re-edited. See, M. Mahdī, *Alfarabi: Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 2001, pp. xxi-xxxv. Of course, the initial impetus given to this approach resides in the work of Leo Strauss and notably his famous essay on al-Fārābī's esoteric reading of Plato, see L. Strauss, *Farabi's Plato* in *Louis Ginzberg Jubilee Volume*, American Academy for Jewish Research, New York 1945, pp. 357-393. This hermeneutical paradigm is also painstakingly developed in the work of Miriam Galston, see M. Galston, *Politics and Excellence: The Political Philosophy of Alfarabi*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1990.

<sup>6</sup> See, M. Mahdī, *Alfarabi and the Foundation of Islamic Political Philosophy*, University of Chicago Press, London 2001, pp. 58-60.

well as his meticulous description of human physiology are nothing more but subtle rhetorical ploys meant to win over the consent of his readers and ultimately ensure their passive acquiescence to his wider political agenda<sup>7</sup>.

The present investigation seeks to show that precisely the opposite view is correct. I argue that far from being a deceptive veil deployed to conveniently mask al-Fārābī's true political doctrine, his cosmological and biological analyses provide the necessary theoretical underpinning upon which the edifice of his civil science is erected. A major benefit of this position is that it allows us to have, for the first time, a unified and systematic vision of al-Fārābī's political philosophy. From this perspective, al-Fārābī's overriding concern is to clarify, rather than obfuscate, the physical and cosmological roots of his *scientia civilis* by furnishing a coherent account of human social flourishing within a larger philosophical context.

To carry out this project it will be helpful to begin our inquiry by spelling out how, according to al-Fārābī, the First Being (*al-mawjūd al-'awwal*) orders the cosmos. This important question is broached in the opening chapter where the Farabian understanding of divine providence is contrasted with Alexander of Aphrodisias' highly influential account of *pronoia* ('*ināya*). As we shall see, al-Fārābī fully endorses Alexander's well-known argument that divine care obtains at the level of species rather than that of individuals. However, unlike the Aristotelian commentator, al-Fārābī fits this line of reasoning in a broadly metaphysical and emanationist scheme. In particular, he explains that the survival of sublunary species depends on the divine attribute of '*adl* or justice<sup>8</sup>. Al-Fārābī further signals his commitment to this thesis by employing typically revealing language. Thus, when discussing the ontological quality of various creatures he

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<sup>7</sup> J. Parens vigorously defends Maḥdī's position in his reading of al-Fārābī's *Talkhīṣ Kitāb Nawāmīs Aflāṭūn*, see J. Parens, *Metaphysics as Rhetoric: Alfarabi's Summary of Plato's Laws*, State University of New York Press, Albany 1995. For an equally vigorous criticism of Parens' argument see, D. Gutas, *Farabi's Knowledge of Plato's Laws*, "International Journal of the Classical Tradition" 4, 1998, pp. 405-411.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 95-97.

consistently speaks of their right (*ḥaqq*) to existence and of the relative worth or merit (*isti'hāl*) of their being. Part of the reason for this is that al-Fārābī believes that each entity receives an appropriate share (*qusṭa*) of existence, commensurate with its ontological value or rank (*rutba*) in the universe.

Naturally, this fair and impartial allocation of being (*wujūd*) is related to divine creation. Indeed, as being emanates (*fayḍ*) from the first cause and proceeds via the intellects and the celestial spheres all the way to the sublunary world, it is parcelled into smaller and smaller quantities amidst the higher and lower elements until it reaches the basest constituent of existence: prime matter. Crucially, in the eyes of al-Fārābī, this whole process happens in conformity with divine justice (*ʿadl*). In other words, each component of the universe receives precisely the share (*qusṭa*) of existence (*wujūd*) it is entitled to. Accordingly, the *wujūd* distributed to the heavenly bodies will be more perfect and permanent than the one allotted to transient sublunary individuals. A case in point is that of terrestrial beings, such as the rational and non-rational animals, which persist and endure only in terms of species<sup>9</sup>.

For al-Fārābī, the resulting cosmic order displays an unmistakable scalar configuration or ranking (*tartīb*). At the very top of the ladder stands the highest and unrivalled principle of the world; the First Being (*al-mawjūd al-ʿawwal*). Afterwards follow, in increasing levels of imperfection, the separate intellects, celestial bodies and sublunary beings. This kind of hierarchical thinking is conspicuous in the opening section of the *Kitāb al-Siyāsa al-Madaniyya*, where al-Fārābī describes the composition of the world in terms of six levels (*marātib*) of existence<sup>10</sup>. In the *Ārāʾ Ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, the universe is similarly depicted by referring to a carefully layered

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<sup>9</sup> Fārābī, *Perfect State* cit., pp. 145-149, 154-159.

<sup>10</sup> Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Siyāsa al-Madaniyya*, ed. F. Najjār, Dār al-Mashreq, Beirut 1993, pp. 21-22.

ranking with clearly discernible ruling and serving elements, which begin with the First Being and end in prime matter<sup>11</sup>.

The second chapter delineates the process by which al-Fārābī extends the theme of cosmic justice and hierarchy to the nature of human physiology. His dispute with Galen concerning the exact location of the body's ruling organ (*al-ʿuḍwu al- raʿīsī*) helps crystallize many of the questions surrounding this issue. The specifics of this controversy are, as might be expected, taken up at greater length in the core of this dissertation; however, al-Fārābī's position can be easily summarized. According to him, the heart is undoubtedly the leading physiological organ, as it not only contains the seat of the nutritional, sensitive, volitional and rational faculties but it also supplies the body with innate heat (*ḥarāra gharīziyya*) and directs the development of the foetus from the earliest moment of conception<sup>12</sup>. When fulfilling its commanding role the heart relies on an intricate and interconnected system of subordinate organs. Thus, while the body is monitored with the assistance of the brain and liver, these subservient members in turn, use a set of inferior parts like the stomach, spleen, intestines and genitalia, to discharge their functions. At this point and not without a hint of satisfaction, al-Fārābī informs us that this finely graded corporeal structure mirrors the just organization of the cosmos<sup>13</sup>.

The same kind of stratified architecture, al-Fārābī insists, characterizes the institution of the ideal polity. This sentiment, which is closely examined in the third chapter, serves at once to explain the function of the perfect ruler and the nature of justice in the virtuous city. Indeed, in a pivotal passage al-Fārābī discusses the work carried out by the city's founding father<sup>14</sup>. There we are told that the true king is supposed to equitably distribute the various political, military, religious, economic and

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<sup>11</sup> Fārābī, *Perfect State* cit., pp. 101-107, 112-113.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 184-195.

<sup>13</sup> Fārābī, *Risāla fī aʿdāʾ al-ḥayawān* cit., pp. 84.

<sup>14</sup> Fārābī, *Siyāsa al-Madaniyya* cit., pp. 83-84.

administrative offices amongst the city's inhabitants. Importantly, when he turns to this task, the perfect prince must insure that each position goes to the best-suited candidate. Since, as I hope to make clear, al-Fārābī believes that certain persons are innately better equipped than others to fulfil particular roles, this process results in matching each office and function to individuals endowed with the appropriate virtues. Consequently, when this distribution is justly effected, the residents of the virtuous city occupy ranks (*rutba*) that reflect their merit (*isti'hāl*) and receive their allotted share (*quṣṭa*) of goods and honours. Al-Fārābī's use of the familiar terminology of *rutba*, *isti'hāl* and *quṣṭa* to describe the arrangement of the city is, of course, no mere coincidence. In fact, throughout his treatment of this topic, he invariably compares the hierarchy prevalent in the perfect city to the stratified order of the universe. This is most conspicuous in his pronouncement that the position of the ideal ruler in the virtuous polity is equivalent to that of the First Being (*al-mawjūd al-'awwal*) in the cosmos. In the *Ārā' Ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, al-Fārābī rounds off an identical description by adding that the perfect king's function is also similar to the role played by the heart<sup>15</sup>. In this way, al-Fārābī underlines the continuity between the cosmic, bodily and political structures.

However, in order to translate this vision into a reality al-Fārābī believes that a particular type of royal discipline is necessary; this is what he calls the *mihna malikiyya fāḍila ūlā* or first virtuous kingly craft<sup>16</sup>. Al-Fārābī's detailed account of this art reveals a deep and persistent absorption in the use of medical language and similes. This attitude comes out quite clearly in the opening aphorisms of the *Fuṣūl Muntaza'a*, where the work of the virtuous ruler is repeatedly compared to that of an expert physician<sup>17</sup>. Indeed, the excellent statesman is said to preserve and restore the moral

<sup>15</sup> Fārābī, *Perfect State* cit., pp. 234-235.

<sup>16</sup> Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Iḥsa' al-'Ulūm*, ed. O. Amin, Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, Cairo 1948, pp. 103-104.

<sup>17</sup> Fārābī, *Fuṣūl* cit., pp. 22-25.

and civil health of the polity in the same way that the competent doctor preserves and restores the physical health of the body. Al-Fārābī uses this analogy to show that royal practice, just like medical practice, requires proficiency in the theoretical and applied elements of a particular discipline. One immediate effect of such a position is that political legitimacy is made to dependent on a certain kind of expertise. In other words, and here al-Fārābī is adamant, an agent's civil authority will always be contingent on his competence in the *mihna malikiyya fāḍila ūlā*. Concomitantly, the rule of any sovereign that is unable or unwilling to master this virtuous craft will be deemed illegitimate and vicious<sup>18</sup>. This is the claim I attempt to substantiate in the fourth and ultimate chapter of this dissertation.

As these observations suggest, al-Fārābī is able to tie together the cosmic, corporeal and political strands of his project by depicting the *mihna malikiyya fāḍila ūlā* in medical terms. One of the upshots of this analogy is that the nature of the ideal and non-ideal polities can be easily described in strong normative language. The ignorant regimes, along with the values, beliefs and institutions they encourage, will be denounced as diseases and illnesses; whereas the just polity will be applauded as the incarnation of health and well-being and will be deemed legitimate on clearly scientific grounds.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 49-50



## Chapter One:

### Divine Providence as Cosmic Justice (*'adl*)

In an important passage of the *Ārā' ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, al-Fārābī endorses the view that the perpetuation of natural kinds in the sublunary realm concerns the species as a whole and is not related to the survival of a specific individual<sup>19</sup>. To illustrate this point, al-Fārābī appeals to the familiar example of animal reproduction. For instance, the continuous existence of horses does not depend on the permanent existence of a specific horse (e.g. Seabiscuit or Bucephalus) but on the ability of horses to generate new individual members of the species. As a result, according to al-Fārābī one can assert that a sublunary species is permanent if “at every moment of time there exists a particular individual of that species at some place or other”<sup>20</sup>. The point is rather obvious, however the argument becomes much more interesting when one takes into consideration the context in which it emerges.

Al-Fārābī resorts to this reasoning in the course of a discussion on the providential order of the cosmos. He uses the argument outlined to establish the view that the universe is structured to insure the flourishing of sublunary life only at the level of species and not that of particulars. Hence, it is acceptable to say, according to al-Fārābī, that divine providence ensures the continuous existence of sublunary species but it would be incorrect to infer from this that the First Being (*al-mawjūd al-awwal*) cares for specific individuals or is involved in the instantiation of particular events<sup>21</sup>.

These last remarks make it quite clear that al-Fārābī's position on this issue is fairly close to the one developed by Alexander of Aphrodisias.

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<sup>19</sup> Fārābī, *Perfect State* cit., pp. 145-149, 154-159.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., pp. 153-154. Translation slightly modified.

<sup>21</sup> Fārābī, *Siyāsa al-Madaniyya* cit., pp. 47-48.

Indeed, both authors seem to hold the opinion that providence obtains at the level of species and not particulars. To clarify this statement, an example might be useful. Consider for instance the belief that ‘providence helped Hārūn al-Rashīd capture the city of Heraclea in Byzantium’. According to our authors this is a mistaken idea. It is incorrect simply because, when divine providence affects particular individuals, it does so only in so far as they are instantiations of a general form which is common to the species. As a result, providence does not affect Hārūn accidentally i.e. as being in a specific place, like Heraclea or engaging in a particular activity, such as warfare. It only affects him substantially, that is as a member of the human species, for example as being two-legged or rational.

Al-Fārābī is clearly committed to this aspect of Alexander’s position and this should come as no surprise. As it is well known, Alexander of Aphrodisias’ treatise *Peri Pronoias*<sup>22</sup> played a key role in the framing of the debate on divine providence amongst both the members of the Kindī-circle<sup>23</sup> and the Baghdad School<sup>24</sup>. In fact and rather tellingly, each group relied on its own specific version of the text. A more accurate and complete translation of the treatise was used by the Baghdad Peripatetics. No doubt, al-Fārābī had access to this translation as it was produced by his close associate and teacher Abū Bishr Mattā under the title *Fī l-‘Ināya*. Further, it also seems that Yahyā Ibn ‘Adī, al-Fārābī’s student, paraphrased at least the early parts of the treatise<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> Alexander’s *Peri Pronoias* survives only in two Arabic versions both edited and translated in German by H.-J. Ruland. See, H.-J. Ruland, *Die Arabischen Fassungen von zwei Schriften des Alexander von Aphrodisias*, Diss., Saarbrücken, 1976. There are as well two more recent editions and translations in French and Italian by respectively P. Thillet and M. Zonta. See, P. Thillet, *Alexandre d’Aphrodise: Traité de la Providence*, Verdier, Paris, 2003. S. Fazzo, M. Zonta, *Alessandro di Afrodisia: La Provvidenza, questioni sulla provvidenza*, Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, Milan, 1998.

<sup>23</sup> S. Fazzo, H. Wiesner, *Alexander of Aphrodisias in the Kindī-Circle and in Al-Kindī’s Cosmology*, “Arabic Science and Philosophy”, 3, 1993, pp. 119-153.

<sup>24</sup> Thillet, *Traité de la Providence* cit., pp. 64-68.

<sup>25</sup> A passage is quoted in Paul Kraus, *Jābir Ibn Hayyān: Contribution à l’histoire des idées scientifiques dans l’Islam*, Vol. II, Imprimerie de l’Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale ,

However, despite al-Fārābī's familiarity with and obvious sympathy for Alexander's views his own position on divine providence is rather different. This is particularly evident within the context of the Baghdad school where a striking feature of al-Fārābī's argument comes out clearly. Indeed, unlike his contemporaries, al-Fārābī does not use *'ināya* which is Abū Bishr's preferred term for rendering into Arabic Alexander's *pronoia*, nor does he resort to using *tadbīr* which is the term favoured by the Kindī-circle. Instead, he tends to reserve these two expressions to designate positions held by other philosophers and often positions which he views with an unfavourable eye<sup>26</sup>. Instead, when talking about his own view of divine providence, al-Fārābī is generally inclined towards the use of the term *'adl* (justice).

I believe that this terminological modification is motivated by profound philosophical reasons. The conceptual shift from *'ināya* to *'adl* allows al-Fārābī to construct a rigorous and systematic theory of cosmic justice that complements the Aristotelian arguments from motion found in Alexander's *Peri Pronoias*. In this way, al-Fārābī is still able to retain certain key features of Alexander's position while seamlessly integrating them within his overall emanationist metaphysics<sup>27</sup>. More precisely, by resorting to the notion and terminology of *'adl* rather than that of *'ināya* al-Fārābī can ultimately connect the order of the body, city and cosmos with the justice inherent in divine creation. To that end, he needs to demonstrate that the First Being is not simply the Unmoved Mover of the universe but also its just creator and

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Cairo 1942-3, pp.179-180. Cited by Thillet, *Traité de la Providence* cit., pp. 64-65. The passage probably originates from the correspondence between Ibn 'Adī and al-Mawṣilī, one of the questions asked by al-Mawṣilī concerns providence see, G. Endress, *The Works of Yaḥyā Ibn 'Adī. An Analytical Inventory*, Ludwig Reichert, Wiesbaden 1977, pp. 97-98. See as well, S. Pines, *A Tenth Century Philosophical Correspondence*, "Proceedings of The American Academy for Jewish Research", 24, 1955, pp.103-136.

<sup>26</sup> For more details see section 5 of this chapter.

<sup>27</sup> On the general Farabian tendency to supplement Aristotelian thought with arguments from emanation see, Th.-A. Druart, *Al-Fārābī and Emanationism*, in *Studies in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. J. Wippel, Catholic University of America Press, Washington D.C. 1987, pp. 23-43 and M. Rashed, *Al-Fārābī's Lost Treatise On Changing Beings and the Possibility of a Demonstration of the Eternity of the World*, "Arabic Sciences and Philosophy" 18, 2008, pp.19-58.

sustainer. In light of this, it seems best to continue our inquiry by returning to our opening remarks and emphasizing this time the differences rather than the similarities in the arguments of Alexander and al-Fārābī.

### 1.1 Motion and the Two Realms of Providence in Alexander:

Aside from the *Peri Pronoias*, there are several other sources for Alexander's position on providence, such as his *De Fato* and *De Principiis Universi*<sup>28</sup>. Important evidence can also be found in his aporetic essays and most notably in *Quaestiones* 1.25, 2.3, 2.19 and 2.21<sup>29</sup>. For the moment I will focus on *Quaestio* 2.19, as it was translated (rather freely) by the Kindī-circle, it seems probable that it was available as well to the members of the Baghdad school. The relevant arguments run this way:

I- "[a] This [the heavens] is in no need of [some being] to exercise providence [over it], having in its own proper nature perfection with respect to being and well-being. But as much of [the world] is [b] subject to coming-to-be and passing away, and needs assistance from something else both for being and for the eternity in species [that comes about] through orderly change, this is that over which providence is exercised, being governed by the orderly movement of the divine part of the world and [its being] in a certain relation to it."<sup>30</sup>

The first point worth considering appears in section I-[a] and it is the statement that providence is not exercised at the level of the celestial bodies. According to Alexander, the perfect nature of the heavenly bodies

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<sup>28</sup> R. W. Sharples, *Alexander of Aphrodisias: On Fate*, Gerald Duckworth & Co., London 1983. Alexander's *De Principiis* survives only in an Arabic version entitled *Mabādi' al-Kull* see, C. Genequand, *Alexander of Aphrodisias: On the Cosmos*, E. J. Brill, Leiden 2001. As well as, A. Badawī, ed. *Mabādi' al-Kull*, in *Aristū 'inda' l-'Arab*, Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, Cairo 1947, pp. 253-277.

<sup>29</sup> As Fazzo and Wiesner have shown some of these texts were available to the Kindī-circle see S. Fazzo, H. Wiesner, *Kindī-Circle*, cit., pp. 126-9. For more details see G. Endress, *Proclus Arabus: Zwanzig Abschnitte aus der Institutio Theologica in arabischer Übersetzung*, Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, Beirut 1973.

<sup>30</sup> Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Quaestiones* 2.16-3.15, trans. R. W. Sharples, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1994, pp. 63, 21-6.

renders the need for any sort of assistance superfluous<sup>31</sup>. As a consequence, it appears that Alexander relates the idea of providence to that of help and deficiency. The object of providence must exhibit a kind of lack or handicap to derive any benefit from the care it will receive. Differently put, for providence to obtain there must be a relation between a proficient caretaker and a deficient beneficiary. The same argument is used in the *Peri Pronoias* to distinguish two realms of providence: (1) the realm *where* it is exercised and (2) the realm *from where* it is exercised<sup>32</sup>.

This leads Alexander to conclude in section I-[b] that the imperfect sublunary realm is evidently the privileged recipient of providence, whereas the celestial world is its provider. What the sublunary world lacks above all is the regularity of circular motion. In other words, if left to its own devices the sublunary world would be dominated by the natural rectilinear motion of the primary elements. And this rectilinear motion if left unchecked would lead to the dissolution of natural bodies and their ultimate extinction. Alexander's argument here follows quite faithfully the position exposed by Aristotle in the *Generation and Corruption* 2.10, where heavenly circular movement corrects this deficiency.

In another part of the *Peri Pronoias*, Alexander goes a step further and famously tries to link the existence of sublunary species to celestial motion. Alexander builds his case by showing how motion is communicated from the heavenly bodies to the sublunary world.

II- "[a] That power, engendered by the motion of celestial bodies, which is imparted [to terrestrial bodies] in one way or another, as we've explained, [therefore] causes the [latter] to move like the former, in the sense that the successive generation of single particulars of the same form affords things down here a way to last forever. [b]The effect of that [successivity] is to bring out what is universal. For the generation of particulars serves to maintain the universal species they have in common. Socrates comes into

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<sup>31</sup> For more details on this issue see, R.W. Sharples, *Alexander of Aphrodisias on Divine Providence: Two Problems*, "Classical Quarterly", 32, 1982, pp. 198-211.

<sup>32</sup> Ruland, *Alexander von Aphrodisias* cit., pp 60-4.

being so that there be man[kind]; Achilles' horse Xanthus comes into being so that there be horse[kind]"<sup>33</sup>

To adequately understand the argument made in section II-[a] a missing element must be provided. When Alexander says "as we've explained" in the second line of the text quoted above, it is unclear what he is exactly alluding to. I agree with F.W. Zimmermann's suggestion that Alexander is probably referring to an earlier passage of the *Peri Pronoias* where he states, in typical Aristotelian fashion, that the absence of void in the universe ensures that the celestial and sublunary worlds are in contact<sup>34</sup>. This fact helps explain the transmission of circular motion to the realm below the moon. In turn, the features of regularity and permanence, which define circular motion<sup>35</sup>, are also passed on to sublunary objects.

According to Alexander the regularity and permanence of heavenly motion is expressed at the terrestrial level by the maintenance of sublunary species. The argument in section II-[b] simply speaks of that maintenance as an effect of the circular movement of the heavens. But in other parts of the *Peri Pronoias*, Alexander gives additional details. For instance, he explains that the motion of certain celestial bodies and specifically that of the sun brings about specific recurrent patterns such as seasonal cycles which in turn contribute to the well-being and survival of sublunary species<sup>36</sup>. And in different parts of the same work, Alexander talks as well of a certain power

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp. 87-91. Translation by F.W. Zimmerman, slightly modified, in R. Sorabji ed., *The Philosophy of the Commentators (200-600 AD): A Sourcebook Vol. II, Physics*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 2005, pp. 80-81.

<sup>34</sup> Sorabji ed., *Commentators* cit., p. 80. Also see, Ruland, *Alexander von Aphrodisias* cit., pp. 73-75. Al-Fārābī accepts of course, the view that vacuum does not exist. For his defense of Aristotle's position on vacuum see, N. Lugal, A. Sayili, *Fārābī's Article on Vacuum*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, Ankara 1951. See, as well the useful emendations to this text suggested by Jon McGinnis in his entry "Arabic and Islamic Natural Philosophy and Natural Science", in *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Fall 2008, URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/arabic-islamic-natural/>>. Also H. Daiber, *Fārābī's Abhandlung über das Vakuum: Quellen und Stellung in der islamischen Wissenschaftsgeschichte*, "Der Islam", 60, 1983, pp. 37-47.

<sup>35</sup> *Cael.* 1.4.

<sup>36</sup> Ruland, *Alexander von Aphrodisias* cit., pp 33-5.

being transmitted via circular motion to sublunary beings. It is unclear what this power exactly is and what sort of capabilities it is intended to transmit to insure the flourishing of sublunary species. At times Alexander equates that “divine power” to nature and as a result comes dangerously close to reducing providence to the general order of physics<sup>37</sup>.

Overall, Alexander’s complex account of providence is at times rather tentative especially in its details<sup>38</sup>. Still, I think that certain essential features emerge, and these clearly showcase the importance of motion in Alexander’s theory: First, the fact that providence is exercised only at the level of the sublunary world by the heavenly bodies; second, the view that circular motion communicates itself to the sphere below the moon and thus helps the flourishing of sublunary species.

#### 1.2- Divine Providence as Ontological Justice in al-Fārābī:

As noted in the opening paragraphs of this chapter al-Fārābī endorses the argument concerning the survival of sublunary life in terms of species. Similarly, he accepts the importance of the role played by the celestial elements in their preservation<sup>39</sup>. This is because, like Alexander, al-Fārābī is committed to a broadly Aristotelian physics. However, whereas Alexander is happy to frame his theory of providence within the confines of physical order and to make it mostly an affair of motion, al-Fārābī wishes to say something rather different; in his case, it is the metaphysical dimension of providence that is emphasized. And in section 3, I shall argue that he extends the reach of providence beyond the sublunary sphere and into the celestial world.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid, pp. 78-9. Where Alexander states: “Indeed, that divine power, which we also call nature, maintains the [terrestrial] existents in their being and structures them according to a certain proportion and order”.

<sup>38</sup> See, Sharples, *Two Problems* cit., pp 198-211.

<sup>39</sup> Fārābī, *Siyāsa al-Madaniyya* cit., pp. 60-61.

But before, I must explain how al-Fārābī understands divine providence as an ontological principle and why he calls this principle justice (*‘adl*). This will come out most clearly in the following set of arguments labelled [A] to [D]. In these excerpts al-Fārābī retains certain elements of Alexander’s theory. For instance, providence is still concerned with the perpetuation of sublunary life at the level of species; however, al-Fārābī’s reasoning relies on a different line of thought.

When speaking of sublunary existents in passage [A], al-Fārābī presents these entities as being caught between two rival ontological claims: that of their form and that of their matter. By virtue of their form sublunary beings have a tendency to endure. On the other hand, by virtue of their matter, they are inclined to alteration and change<sup>40</sup>. The vocabulary employed by al-Fārābī in the course of this argument is quite revealing. He quickly incorporates within the traditional Aristotelian terminology of form (*ṣūra*) and matter (*mādda*) a kind of talk that relies heavily on the vocabulary of justice. Thus, al-Fārābī speaks of the ontological “right” (*ḥaqq*) and “merit” (*istī’hāl*) of sublunary beings. And he adds that these beings have a right to their form and a right to their matter and he further associates the propensities discussed above to these rights:

A-“Its [i.e. the sublunary being] right (*ḥaqq*) by virtue of its form is to remain in the existence which it has, and its right (*ḥaqq*) by virtue of its matter is to assume another existence contrary to the existence which it has.”<sup>41</sup>

<sup>40</sup> An important element of al-Fārābī’s reasoning relates to his view on the existence of prime matter, which according to him appears as a result of the various movements of the celestial bodies. However, this topic is unfortunately beyond the scope of our present study. Whether or not this position is genuinely Aristotelian is very much open to debate, but it is clearly that of al-Fārābī, see Fārābī, *Perfect State* cit., p. 135. For a useful analysis of the classical debates on Aristotle and prime matter, see W. Charlton, *Aristotle’s Physics: Books I and II*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1992. M. L. Gill, *Aristotle on Substance*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1989. M. Rashed, *De la Génération et la Corruption*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 2005. R. Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion: Theories in Antiquity and their Sequel*, Cornell University Press, Cornell 1988. M. Scharle, *A Synchronic Justification for Aristotle’s Commitment to Prime Matter*, “Phronesis” 54, 2009, pp. 326-345.

<sup>41</sup> Fārābī, *Perfect State* cit., p. 145.



According to al-Fārābī, a significant dilemma emerges as a result of these contradictory inclinations. Indeed, if these opposing claims are not reconciled the ontological stability of all sublunary beings is threatened. Take for instance an existent “x”: its ability to persist as an “x” will depend on the resolution of the rival claims associated with its form and matter. As such the problem is directly related to the hylomorphic composition of the object. The object will be unable to persist as an “x” if its form is incapable of controlling the tendency to change inherent in its matter. In this way, the problem seems to be associated mostly with matter. But al-Fārābī adds a further difficulty in section [B]. He continues his exposition along the same lines, meaning that he frames the question once again by resorting to the vocabulary of justice when discussing ontology. For instance, he will talk of the “greater right” and “allotted share” of existence in the argument that follows:

B-“For neither of them [i.e. the sublunary being] has a greater right (*ʿawlā*) to be in existence than the other and neither has a greater right to remain and last than the other, since each of them has an allotted share (*qusṭa*) of existence and duration”<sup>42</sup>

In excerpt [B] al-Fārābī expands the problem, from dealing merely with a hylomorphic composite “x” to viewing that composite within the larger context of sublunary life. And this is only natural, for the existence of “x” is directly related to that of other sublunary beings. Indeed, if a composite “x” changes, it will be transformed into another sublunary composite “y”. Thus, by broadening his perspective, al-Fārābī is able to touch on the larger issue concerning the survival of sublunary life. I now come to the most interesting

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., pp. 144-145. This passage should not be construed as meaning that all sublunary beings have the same claim to existence or that their forms should subsist in matter for the same length of time. As al-Fārābī indicates in excerpt [K], the share allotted to each sublunary existent is related to its rank (*rutba*), conveniently in the *Siyāsa al-Madaniyya* he provides a ranking of the sublunary forms: the lowest is that of the four elements, followed by that of bodies that are a mixture of these, after minerals, comes in ascending order the forms of plants, non-rational animals and rational animals. See, Fārābī, *Siyāsa al-Madaniyya* cit., pp. 38.

excerpt, which contains al-Fārābī's exposition of his understanding of providence as ontological justice and which will explain why sublunary beings have an allotted share of existence:

C- "Justice (*'adl*) herein is, then, that matter be taken from this and given to that, or vice versa, and that this takes place in succession. But because justice must obtain for these existents, it is not possible that one and the same thing should last perpetually as one in number, but its eternal permanence is established in its being one in species."<sup>43</sup>

Although it might not be readily obvious, al-Fārābī's concern in section [C] is simply to show that the flourishing of sublunary life depends on the survival of the species rather than that of the individual. Even if the conclusion is familiar from our discussion of Alexander's view on providence, al-Fārābī's line of thought is different. For al-Fārābī, the survival of sublunary life in terms of species is a result of justice (*'adl*) as well as that of circular motion<sup>44</sup>. This is because justice resolves the rival claims of form and matter that al-Fārābī introduced in excerpt [A] by giving each its allotted share of existence. His reasoning seems to be that divine providence *qua* *'adl* adjudicates between the form's right to permanence and matter's right to alteration by fairly distributing their ontological claims, and in so doing providence appears to bring about sublunary species. But how exactly is the idea of species a just solution that satisfies both rights? The argument is in fact rather simple: The reason a given form is eternal is not that there is any one parcel of matter that eternally has the form, but that the form is always instantiated by some parcel of matter or other. In other words, the form is eternal as a species. As a result, the right of the form to permanence is satisfied and similarly, matter is allowed to change and receive different forms at different times. The nature of this process is outlined by al-Fārābī:

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., pp. 147-149.

<sup>44</sup> Fārābī, *Siyāsa al-Madaniyya* cit., pp. 63-65.

D- "In order that a thing remain one in species, the individuals of that species must at one time exist and last; then they must perish and other individuals of that species must take their place and last for some time; then they perish, and the place of the individuals which perish is, again, taken by other individuals of that species. And that happens perpetually in this way."<sup>45</sup>

Al-Fārābī's argument seems to be that the regular process of generation and corruption, which allows for the flourishing of sublunary life, is supervenient on the deeper mechanism of divine providence. And providence in this case is to be understood as a principle of ontological justice that fairly allocates the proper "shares" (*quṣṭa*) of existence amongst the various beings<sup>46</sup>. In this way, it seems that al-Fārābī supplements Alexander's account by furnishing a metaphysical rationale to explain why the celestial spheres communicate their beneficial effects to lower entities.

### 1.3-Divine Providence and Circular Motion:

This is not to say that al-Fārābī rejects the Aristotelian argument concerning the favourable influence of heavenly bodies on sublunary life. And as a matter of fact, he agrees with Alexander, in viewing permanent circular motion, as one of the key features of that influence. However, unlike Alexander, al-Fārābī believes that providence extends as well to the celestial bodies. As I hope to make clear in the next paragraphs, al-Fārābī's position is that divine providence is also in part responsible for the circular motion of the heavenly bodies. This line of thought is developed in the excerpts labelled [E] to [I] and once again al-Fārābī appeals to the notion of providence as justice to make his case.

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<sup>45</sup> Fārābī, *Perfect State* cit., p. 149

<sup>46</sup> I think that part of al-Fārābī's argument is that due to its hylomorphic structure sublunary life is unlikely to flourish in the following two cases: Case (1), form dominates the hylomorphic composite and brings the process of generation to a halt by holding a monopoly on matter. Case (2), matter dominates the hylomorphic composite and renders the process of corruption all pervasive through constant change. Hence, to remedy these possible outcomes, there is a need for a distributive ontological principle like providential justice.

When speaking of celestial bodies, al-Fārābī stresses the point that their enmattered nature renders them less perfect than immaterial beings, and more specifically less perfect than the separate intellects. An important mark of that imperfection is that their activity or movement is not defined or given from the start. Part of the reason for this according to al-Fārābī is that *qua* bodies the celestial beings are necessarily in a place. As such their movement will depend on the relation they have to their specific place in the universe. This place, al-Fārābī calls a surrounding (*ḥawl*), and he defines the relation it has with its celestial body in the following way<sup>47</sup>:

E-“Now, none of the parts of this body deserves (*awlā*) any part of the surrounding more than another-but each part of the body must necessarily occupy each part of the surrounding; nor does it deserve (*awlā*) one part at one moment and not at another, but [each part of the body must occupy] at every moment [a part of the surrounding] perpetually.”

Although al-Fārābī does not directly use the term *adl* in section [E], it is clear that he defines the relation between the celestial body and its surrounding place in terms of justice. Thus, he speaks of each part of the heavenly body as being equally deserving of each part of the surrounding place. In other words, according to al-Fārābī the relation between the body and its place has to exhibit the attribute of justice. However, a difficulty readily emerges: how can a body be at two different places at the same time? For it seems

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<sup>47</sup> Al-Fārābī's use of this term and his theory of place is still poorly understood, there are of course echoes of the Aristotelian view exposed in *Physics* 4.4. But if, as is generally assumed, we are correct in tracing a Farabian influence on this topic to Ibn Bājja's, then the evidence suggests a certain modification of Aristotle's view. The Farabian position attributed to Ibn Bājja is well described by J. McGinnis: "Ibn Bājja begins by slightly modifying Aristotle's definition of place; instead of being the first *containing* limit, place is now identified with 'the proximate *surrounding* surface.' The shift in language is slight, but it allows Ibn Bājja the opportunity to distinguish between two senses of 'surrounding surface.' Things can either be surrounded by a concave or convex surface, maintained Ibn Bājja. A rectilinear body, that is, a body that undergoes rectilinear motion, has as its place a concave surface that is outside of it, whereas a truly spherical body, that is, a body that undergoes circular motion or rotation, has as its place a convex surface, which is inside of the rotating body and is in fact the surface of the center around which the body rotates." See, McGinnis, *Natural Philosophy* cit.

that this is what justice would require? Al-Fārābī frames this puzzle for the celestial bodies in the following manner:

F-“But it is impossible that two parts of the surrounding should be occupied simultaneously by the same part of the body at the same moment.”

The issue presented in [F] is simply that each part of the heavenly body cannot be in contact at the same time with each part of the surrounding place. However, because all the parts of the surrounding place deserve all the parts of the celestial body equally a solution must be found. Thankfully, the problem can be easily resolved through movement but more importantly for our purposes the solution will define the exact motion of the celestial bodies<sup>48</sup>. Simply put, to respect the conditions introduced in section [E] the heavenly body will have to move by rotating in such a way as to distribute equally the time each part of the body spends in contact with each part of its surrounding place. In this manner, the celestial body will have to rotate at a regular interval to insure the just distribution of each one of its parts over its surrounding place. And as al-Fārābī indicates this movement will have to be perpetual in order to insure that cosmic justice obtains at all times:

G-“And because the part of the surrounding in which it was is not at one moment more worthy of it than at another [moment], it must unceasingly proceed from one part of the surrounding to the next.”

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<sup>48</sup> I use the word “define” rather than “cause” in this context because it is crucial not to confuse al-Fārābī’s argument here as being about the cause for the movement of the heavenly sphere, rather than being about the kind of movement it is. According to al-Fārābī the heavens receive the power to move from the First. Similarly, the argument of circularity from providence which I present here should not be construed as denying the validity of other arguments equally accepted by al-Fārābī, such as the fact that the heavens are made of aether or that circular movement is eternal because it has no opposites. See for instance al-Fārābī’s defence of Aristotle’s view on aether against Philoponus in M. Mahdī, *The Arabic Text of Alfarabi’s Against John the Grammarian*, in *Medieval and Middle Eastern Studies in Honor of Aziz S. Atiya*, ed. S. A. Hanna, E. J. Brill, Leiden 1972, pp. 268-284. An English translation of this text is also available see, M. Mahdī, *Alfarabi against Philoponus*, “Journal of Near Eastern Studies”, 24, 1967, pp. 233-260. See also, M. Rashed, *Al-Fārābī’s Lost Treatise On Changing Beings and the Possibility of a Demonstration of the Eternity of the World*, “Arabic Science and Philosophy”, 18, 2008, pp.19-58.

So far al-Fārābī's argument is incomplete. Part of the issue is that sections [F] and [G] can be interpreted as simply implying a movement of rotation rather than that of a full-blown circular motion. In other words, the celestial bodies could satisfy the conditions established in [E] by merely rotating on their own axis instead of describing a complete revolution around the earth's centre. However, this is not what al-Fārābī has in mind and he makes it clear in excerpts [H] and [I], where he refers to the possibility of place being one in species.

H-“When it is not possible that that part of the body should belong all the time to that part of the surrounding by being one in number, it will become one in species with that part of the surrounding; occupying sometimes one part of the surrounding, and sometimes not.”

When talking about a place or a surrounding as being one in species, I believe that al-Fārābī has in mind the idea of a celestial orbit. The surroundings are one in species because they share the same essential feature; i.e. they are always at an identical distance from a centre. In that sense, the celestial bodies do not simply rotate on their axis but describe a circular movement around the terrestrial centre. The perimeter of this circle, with its given radius, constitutes their place or surrounding in species. As such and in order to satisfy the conditions of justice exposed in [E] the heavenly bodies will have to perpetually travel within their celestial orbit. In this way, each part of the body will be equally in contact with each part of its surrounding. Al-Fārābī presents the movement of the heavenly bodies exactly in this manner in the following extract:

I-“Then that part of the body will go on to a part of the surrounding which is similar to the first part in species, then leave it too for some time and go on to a third part of the surrounding, which is similar to the first part of the surrounding. It will leave this too for some time and go on to a fourth part of

the surrounding which is similar to the first part. It will have this motion forever.”<sup>49</sup>

This seems to be a good moment to recapitulate our argument; so far we have seen that al-Fārābī is able to retain important elements of Alexander’s position without resorting to the same sort of justification. For instance, al-Fārābī is able to affirm that providence obtains for species rather than particulars at the sublunary level by supplementing the arguments from motion with arguments from cosmic justice (*‘adl*). Similarly, al-Fārābī is able to warrant the circular orbit of celestial bodies on the same basis, in addition to the more standard appeals to the perfection of their physical movement or to their desire for emulating the First Being<sup>50</sup>. In the next section, the reasons behind al-Fārābī’s strategy of complementing appeals to physical motion as a cause for divine providence with a metaphysical justification will become clearer. Appropriately enough, these reasons are made apparent in another context where al-Fārābī deals with a problem inherited from Alexander.

#### 1.4- Divine Providence and Emanation:

In the *Peri Pronoias*, Alexander famously says that while the heavens do not exercise providence over the sublunary world in an accidental fashion, they do so in a secondary rather than a primary way<sup>51</sup>. The distinction between primary and secondary care is of course an attempt to solve a major difficulty concerning the manner in which providence is exercised. For if the heavens exercised providence in a primary fashion over the sublunary world, it would imply that the terrestrial realm is of greater importance than the celestial world, which of course would be absurd.

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<sup>49</sup> For all excerpts E to I see Fārābī, *Perfect State* cit., pp.125-127. All translations are slightly modified.

<sup>50</sup> Fārābī, *Perfect State* cit., pp. 118-120.

<sup>51</sup> Ruland, *Alexander von Aphrodisias* cit., pp 64-70. This point is also discussed in *Quaestio* 2.21. See, Sharples, *Two Problems* cit., pp 204-210.

However, if providence were exercised in an accidental manner, it would not be providence at all. The importance of this argument has not gone unnoticed amongst Arabic philosophers. In fact, Alexander's reasoning is described with great precision in the corpus of works attributed to Jābir ibn Ḥayyān<sup>52</sup>.

Al-Fārābī faces the same problem, but in a slightly different form. In his case, the question should be phrased in broader terms. Because al-Fārābī does not restrict providence to the sublunary realm, the First should be understood as exercising justice towards both celestial and sublunary beings. The difficulty of course remains the same, in the sense that al-Fārābī cannot have the First Being provide and care for these entities in a direct and primary fashion. For, if this were the case, the First Being would have an activity and a function that is not self-directed. And as we know, al-Fārābī repeatedly affirms that the First Being has no final end (*ghāya*) or purpose (*gharaḍ*) outside its own substance<sup>53</sup>. However, we also know that in his eyes, the First Being is also the creator of all the other existents<sup>54</sup>; as such these two major features need to be harmonized. Conveniently, al-Fārābī frames his solution to this dilemma in his discussion of the emanative process:

J-“Inasmuch as the substance of the First is a substance from which all the existents emanate, without neglecting (*yukhillā*)<sup>55</sup> any existence beneath its existence, It is generous, and Its generosity is in Its substance”

<sup>52</sup> Paul Kraus, *Jābir Ibn Hayyān: Contribution à l'histoire des idées scientifiques dans l'Islam*, Vol. II, Imprimerie de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, Cairo 1942-3. Quoted in Thillet, *Traité de la Providence* cit., pp. 66-7.

<sup>53</sup> Fārābī, *Perfect State* cit., pp. 57-9

<sup>54</sup> This is the first line of the *Ārā' ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*: “The First Existent is the First Cause of the existence of all other existents.” See, Fārābī, *Perfect State* cit., p. 57.

<sup>55</sup> Given the nature of the argument in this context Walzer's reading “*yukhillā*” is far superior to that of Nādir's “*yukhaṣṣa*”. For Nādir's reading see, Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Ārā' ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, ed. A. Nādir, Dār al-Mashreq, Beirut 1991, pp. 57-8. Based on Nādir's text the passage would read this way: “Inasmuch as the substance of the First is a substance from which all the existents emanate, without being particularized (*yukhaṣṣa*) by any existence beneath its existence, It is generous, and Its generosity is in Its substance”. In this context, it is hard to make any sense of the way in which the attribute of generosity is



Al-Fārābī's use of the expression "without neglecting" (*min ghayri an yukhilla*) is extremely important in this context. Indeed, he has spent the better part of the opening chapters of the *Ārā' ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila* arguing against any direct involvement of the First Being in the affairs of the sublunary, celestial or even immaterial realms. As a result, this suggestion should be taken seriously. All the more so, since it is explicitly framed in terms of the First Being's substance: The lack of neglect towards inferior beings is said to be a result of the generosity inherent in its substance. In that sense, the exercise of providence derives explicitly from the First Being's relation to itself rather than its relation or solicitude for other existents. Al-Fārābī makes this point particularly clear when he warns the reader against a possible anthropomorphic understanding of the attribute of generosity as applied to the First. Unlike a human being, al-Fārābī says, the First does not receive or seek any kind of benefit from its generosity. His relationship to its creation is not like that of parents to their offspring or that of rich man to his wealth<sup>56</sup>. But while generosity can account for the First Being's creation of other existents, al-Fārābī associates another crucial element with its substance: justice (*'adl*). In point of fact, it is justice that explains the care and ordering that other elements derive from the First Being:

K- "And inasmuch as all the existent receive their order of rank from It, and each existence receives from the First its allotted share (*qusṭa*) of existence in accordance with its rank (*rutba*), the First is just (*adil*) and Its justice (*'adl*) is in its substance [...] The First's substance is also such that the existents, when they have issued from It in their ranks (*rutba*), are necessarily united, connected and ordered (*nizām*) with one another in a way that they become one whole and are established like one thing."<sup>57</sup>

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related to that of particularity. How could the First be generous in its substance because it is not "particularized"? Moreover, I find it equally difficult to understand what being "particularized" in its substance means for the First Being.

<sup>56</sup> Fārābī, *Perfect State* cit., p. 91.

<sup>57</sup> For excerpts J and K see, Fārābī, *Perfect State* cit., pp. 95-7.

In passage [K] al-Fārābī describes how justice (*‘adl*) emanates from the substance of the First Being. The implications of that process for the celestial and sublunary existents are also clearly detailed. Each one of them is to receive its allotted share (*qusṭa*) of being (*wujūd*) along with its rank (*rutba*) in the order (*niẓām*) of existence. This terminology is of course familiar from the arguments developed in section 2 and 3 of this chapter. It is now easier to appreciate how divine providence is related to the emanation of justice from the First Being. Clearly, it is through this process that, for instance, each sublunary being is granted its share of existence (*qusṭa*) and, as a result, the survival and flourishing of sublunary life in terms of species is ensured.

Thus, by relating divine providence to emanation al-Fārābī is able to show that the care directed towards celestial and sublunary life does not interfere with the First’s self-actualization of its substance. In other words, al-Fārābī completely sidesteps the problem confronted by Alexander. And as a result, he has no use for a distinction between primary and secondary care. This is because divine providence is inherent in the creative process that brings about the cosmos. In light of this, it is easier to understand why al-Fārābī has avoided framing his theory of providence solely in physical terms but has added justice as a reason to explain the favourable effects of motion. His objective all along has been to construct a theory of providence related to the divine creation of the world. And by making justice, that is the providential order of the universe, emanate from the substance of the First Being he has successfully and ingeniously reached that goal.

#### 1.5- Divine Providence and the problem of Evil:

Last but not least, I would like to draw attention to the consistent manner in which al-Fārābī prefers the use of *‘adl* to *‘ināya* in his work. An excellent example comes up in the *Fuṣūl muntaza’a* where al-Fārābī

touches on the standard problem of divine providence and the existence of evil. The relevant passages are found in aphorisms seventy-four and eighty-seven, labelled respectively excerpt [L] and [M] in the next paragraphs. This is a very interesting philosophical issue, but I will be mostly concerned with the terminological side of the question. In [L] al-Fārābī attempts to refute a view of providence commonly associated with Stoicism and most probably taken up, as Dunlop suggests, by a number of theologians<sup>58</sup>. When speaking of this position, which he calls the “root of wicked opinions”, al-Fārābī talks about providence in terms of *‘ināya* and *tadbīr*. However, when al-Fārābī introduces his own views concerning the existence of evil, he speaks of providence in term of justice (*‘adl*). I shall now turn to a brief examination of aphorism eighty-seven:

L- “Many persons hold different beliefs about God’s providence (*‘ināya*) for His creatures, may He be exalted. Some claim that He provides for His creatures just as the king provides for his flock and their welfare-without becoming directly involved in each one of their affairs, nor without mediation between each one [of those] and his associate or his wife. [...] Others are of the opinion that that is not enough unless He takes over for them and takes upon Himself, on their behalf, the governing (*tadbīr*) of each one of His creatures’ actions and welfare and does not allow anyone of His creatures to be in charge of another. Otherwise, these would be His partners and aides. From that, it follows that He is responsible for many of the actions that are defects, blameworthy things, base things, the error of those who err, and obscene speech and deed. And when any one of His creatures is intent upon tricking one of His helpers of refuting by means of objection the statement of someone who is telling the truth, He would be his aide and the One responsible for directing and guiding him. He would drive this person to

<sup>58</sup> See, D. M. Dunlop, *Al-Fārābī: Fuṣūl al-Madani* (“Aphorisms of the Statesman”), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1961, pp. 69. There are clear allusions in this excerpt to the doctrine of the Mujbirah such as Jahm Ibn Ṣafwān, Ḍirār Ibn ‘Amr and Ḥusayn Ibn Muḥammad al-Najjār. These theologians were known for defending a strong determinist position based on a complete denial of human free will. Thus according to Jahm and his associates, human beings make no deliberate choices and are said to act only metaphorically since their actions are entirely determined by Divine providence. See, J. Van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra: Ein geschichte des religiösen denkens im frühen Islam*, vol. 2, Walter De Gruyter, Berlin 1991, pp.496-497, 568-569. See also, J. Van Ess, *Ḍirār b. ‘Amr und die Cahmīya: Biographie einer vergessenen Schule*, “Der Islam”, 43, 1967, pp. 241-279. See as well, C. Bouamrane, *Le Problème de la Liberté Humaine dans la Pensée Musulmane*, J. Vrin, Paris 1978, pp. 33-38.

fornication, murder, theft, and what is baser than that such as the actions of children, drunkards, and mad persons. Now if they deny some of His governing (*tadbīr*) or aiding (*‘ināya*) they must deny all of it.”<sup>59</sup>

The position which al-Fārābī rejects is the view that divine providence extends to all things including particulars. Al-Fārābī’s refutation focuses primarily on the ethical nature of the problem and specifically on the question of evil and moral responsibility. Al-Fārābī’s reasoning is straightforward: if divine providence operates and guides all particular events at the sublunary level, then it brings about all states of affairs both good and evil. The latter ones could be the result of blameworthy acts such as “fornication, murder and theft” or of thoughtless deeds, such as the ones carried out by “drunkards, madmen and children”. In light of this, divine providence would be the direct cause of wrong-doing and evil in the sublunary world. Al-Fārābī concludes, by saying that the partisans of this view have to either accept that their position will make God responsible for irrational and wicked actions or deny the existence of providence altogether. What is interesting, in this passage is al-Fārābī’s consistent use of the terms *‘ināya* and *tadbīr* when speaking of this interpretation of providence. However, when al-Fārābī turns to his own solution of the problem of evil in aphorism seventy-four, he frames his answer by referring to providence as justice (*‘adl*). As is made abundantly clear in section [M], he argues that evil is not caused by providence; rather it is human agency which brings about morally reprehensible acts. And in presenting his position, al-Fārābī relies on the familiar vocabulary of *‘adl*, *tartīb*, *niẓām*, and *istī’hāl*:

M-“Evil has no absolute existence, nor is it in anything in these worlds, nor in general in anything of which existence is not due to human volition [...] As for the good in the worlds, it is the First Cause, and everything which is consequent on it, and whose being is consequent on what is consequent on it, to the end of the chain of consequents. And as a result of this ranking

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<sup>59</sup> Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Fuṣūl muntaza’a*, ed. F. Najjār, Dār al-Mashreq, Beirut 1993, pp. 91-92. There are echoes here of Alexander’s refutation of the Stoic position in the early part of the *Peri Pronoias*. See, Ruland, *Alexander von Aphrodisias* cit., pp 5-30.

(*tartīb*) how could there be any evil? For all these are according to order (*nizām*) and justice (*‘adl*) with merit (*isti’hāl*), and what comes to pass from merit and justice is altogether good.”<sup>60</sup>

#### 1.6- Divine Providence from Motion to Emanation:

To sum up, divine providence, according to al-Fārābī, consists in the just cosmic order (*nizām*) which emanates from the First Being. This order exhibits a clear scalar structure or ranking (*tartīb*) where each being’s allotted share (*quṣṭa*) of existence is distributed fairly according to its ontological merit (*isti’hāl*). In light of this, it seems rather judicious that al-Fārābī prefers the use of *‘adl* rather than *‘ināya* when speaking of divine providence. The change in terminology not only reflects the connection between providence *qua* *‘adl* and the process of emanation, but it also nicely eliminates the overtones of involved care and deliberation that are associated with words such as *‘ināya* and *tadbīr*.

At this point, I would like to return to the *Peri Pronoias*. I believe that al-Fārābī was impressed by the originality of Alexander’s argument, which manages to create a *via media* between the Stoic view that providence extends to all things and the Epicurean position which denies providence altogether. However, as a good Aristotelian, Alexander develops his argument in accordance with the thesis that God is the Unmoved Mover of the universe, not its creator. Al-Fārābī’s greatest achievement is to retain all

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<sup>60</sup> Fārābī, *Fuṣūl*, cit., pp 80-1. Translation Dunlop modified to match Najjār’s superior edition, see D. M. Dunlop, *Aphorisms*, cit., pp. 59-60. Here it is important to contrast al-Fārābī’s use of the term justice (*‘adl*) with that of the *Mutakallimūn* and notably the Mu’tazilites. Indeed, the principle of divine justice was a cornerstone of Mu’tazilite theological doctrine and for this reason they were also known as the “people of justice” (*Ahl al-‘Adl* or *‘Adliyya*). However, their concern with this issue was entirely related to the problem of human agency and divine retribution rather than cosmogony. To speak of God’s justice (*‘adl*), meant, in Mu’tazilite terms, that human beings would be punished only if they were responsible for their actions. See, W. M. Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 1973, pp. 231-242.

the benefits associated with Alexander's *via media* while developing his position on providence around the notion of God as creator. In that sense, al-Fārābī's argument represents a significant step in the Ancient Commentators' reinterpretation of Aristotle's God<sup>61</sup> from simple mover of the universe to its maker and sustainer.<sup>62</sup> To carry out this project more fully, and to show that the structure of the cosmos tallies with that of the body and ultimately with that of the city as well, al-Fārābī will have to ascertain his understanding of divine providence at the corporeal level against Galen's remarkably influential account of human physiology. In the second chapter, we will examine how al-Fārābī successfully responds to this challenge by defending a specific form of stratified cardiocentrism.

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<sup>61</sup> See, R. Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion*, cit., pp. 249-285 and R.W. Sharples, *Alexander of Aphrodisias and the End of Aristotelian Theology*, in *Metaphysik und Religion: Zur Signatur des Spätantiken Denkens*, ed. M. Erler, T. Kobusch, K.G Saur Verlag, Munich 2002, pp. 1-21.

<sup>62</sup> There is another lesson that can be drawn from our analysis of al-Fārābī's position on providence and it concerns the authorship of the *Harmonization of the Two Sages*. In a recent article Marwan Rashed has called into question the inclusion of this important treatise in the Farabian *corpus*. Rashed follows the lead of Joep Lammeer on this topic and touches on a series of arguments. One of these arguments deals specifically with al-Fārābī's view on providence. The author of the *Harmonization* defends a universal providence which extends to particulars. In view of our findings here, the position exposed in the *Harmonization* seems incompatible with al-Fārābī's understanding of providence as justice. See, J. Lammeer, *Al-Fārābī and Aristotelian Syllogistic: Greek Theory and Islamic Practice*, E.J. Brill, Leiden 1994. M. Rashed, *On the Authorship of the Treatise of the Harmonization of the Opinion of the Two Sages Attributed to Al-Fārābī*, "Arabic Sciences and Philosophy", 19, 2009, pp. 43-82. However, C. M. Bonadeo and more recently D. Janos have both argued against M. Rashed's position see, C. M. Bonadeo, *Al-Fārābī: L'Armonia delle opinion dei due sapienti, il divino Platone e Aristotele*, Edizioni Plus, Pisa 2008, pp. 28-30 and D. Janos, *Al-Fārābī, Creation ex nihilo and the Cosmological Doctrine of the K. al-Jam' and Jawābāt*, "Journal of the American Oriental Society", 129, 2009, pp. 1-18.

## Chapter Two: Cardiocentrism and Hierarchy in the Human Body

In his *Risāla fī a‘dā’ al-ḥayawān*<sup>63</sup>, al-Fārābī presents a series of arguments in defence of Aristotelian physiology and embryology against the criticism introduced by Galen in the *De Usu Partium* VIII, 2-5 (hereafter *De Usu*). Galen’s major complaint in these passages<sup>64</sup> concerns Aristotle’s alleged misunderstanding of the brain’s proper function. Instead of seeing the brain as the seat of the nervous system, Aristotle attributes to the encephalon a thermo-regulating role; its function is to cool the excessive heat that is generated by the heart<sup>65</sup>. This dispute is of course related to the classical debate in Ancient and Medieval philosophy over the appropriate bodily site of the soul’s ruling principle or *hegemonikon* (‘*uḍwu al- ra’ṣi*). Is the *hegemonikon* located in the brain or is it rather found in the heart? Aristotelians and Stoics tended to espouse a cardiocentric view, whereas certain Platonist and a number of physicians, such as Erasistratus and Galen defended an encephalocentric position<sup>66</sup>.

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<sup>63</sup> Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Risāla fī a‘dā’ al-ḥayawān*, in *Traité Philosophiques: Al-Kindī, Al-Fārābī, Ibn Bajjah, Ibn ‘Adyy*, ed. A. Badawi, Publication de L’Université de Libye, Benghazi 1973, pp. 65-115.

<sup>64</sup> Galen, *De Usu Partium Libri XVII*, vol. I, ed. G. Helmreich, Teubner, Leipzig 1907, pp. 445-61. English translation by M. T. May, *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body*, vol. I, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1968, pp. 387-98. The Arabic translation of the *De Usu* was produced by the joint efforts of Ḥubaysh Ibn al-Ḥasan and his more famous uncle Ḥunayn Ibn Ishāq under the title *Risāla fī manāfi’ al- a‘dā’*. For more details on how the translation was carried out see Ḥunayn Ibn Ishāq’s letter to Ibn Yahya in G. Bergsträsser, *Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq über die syrischen und arabischen Galen-Übersetzungen, zum ersten mal herausgegeben und übersetzt*, F. A. Brockhaus, Leipzig 1925, pp. 27-29. At the moment only the sixteenth book of the Arabic version of the *De Usu* is available in a critical edition. See, E. Savage-Smith, *Galen on Nerves, Veins and Arteries: A critical edition and translation from the Arabic, with notes, glossary and an introductory essay*, Diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison 1969.

<sup>65</sup> Arist., *PA.*, II, 653 a 10- b 5

<sup>66</sup> For a helpful overview of the debate see, J. Rocca *Galen on the Brain: Anatomical Knowledge and Physiological Speculation in the Second Century A.D.*, E. J. Brill, Leiden

Naturally, the debate became particularly acute when discussing the respective roles of the brain and the heart. As a result, Aristotle's view that the brain served to refrigerate the warmth exuded by the heart was staunchly opposed by Galen and just as strongly defended by al-Fārābī. After all, the argument is central to cardiocentric claims: if the brain has a thermo-regulating role then it is obviously subservient and secondary to the heart's heating function. Al-Fārābī's version of cardiocentrism, which is introduced in the *Ārā' ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila* relies heavily on this argument to develop a hierarchical vision of human physiology<sup>67</sup>. Thus, according to al-Fārābī, the bodily organs are structured in terms of a strict functional ranking (*tartīb*) where the regent position of the heart is followed by the subordinate roles of the brain, liver, spleen and finally the reproductive organs<sup>68</sup>. But why does al-Fārābī insist on such a stratified version of cardiocentrism?

A brief overview of Galen's counter-argument will give us a hint. According to Galen, Nature or the Demiurge<sup>69</sup> would not have placed the encephalon in the head if it had a thermo-regulating role. Rather, the brain

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2003, pp. 17-46. Another succinct and magisterial presentation of the problem can be found in V. Nutton, *Essay Review: Embodiment of Wills*, "Perspectives in Biology and Medicine", 53, 2010, pp. 271-288. On the debate in the Islamic context see, G. Strohmaier, *Reception and Tradition: Medicine in the Byzantine and Arabic world in Western Medical Thought from Antiquity to the Middle Ages* ed. M. D. Grmek, trans. A. Shuggar, Harvard University Press, Boston 1998, pp. 139-70. On the political ramification of this problem in the Medieval Latin milieu see, J. Le Goff, *Head or Heart? The Political Use of the Body Metaphor in the Middle Ages*, in *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, vol. 3, ed. M. Feher, Zone Books, New York 1989, pp. 13-26. See also, T. Shogimen, *Head or Heart? Revisited: Physiology and Political Thought in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Century*, "History of Political Thought", 28, 2007, pp. 208-229.

<sup>67</sup> Fārābī, *Perfect State* cit., pp. 175-87

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 182-83.

<sup>69</sup> Galen uses both terms interchangeably in the *De Usu*. Nature (*phusis*) is often personified and has skill, forethought and intent. In the Arabic translation, when "*phusis*" is used in a personified way, it will generally be translated as the "Creator" (*al-fā'il*) and sometimes as the "Created order" (*al-khaliqa*). To underline this point, I shall capitalize all Galenic reference to a personified "*phusis*" as Nature. See, Savage-Smith, *Galen on Nerves* cit., pp. 202. For a discussion of Galen's provident and skillful creative figure see, R. Flemming, *Demiurge and Emperor in Galen's World of Knowledge*, in *Galen and the World of Knowledge*, eds. C. Gill, T. Whitmarsh, J. Wilkins, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2009, pp. 59-84.



would have been positioned closer to the heart to easily cool it down<sup>70</sup>. The structure of Galen's argument is revealing, he presupposes that the usefulness (*chreia*) of each organ fits within a much larger design. The organ's function and location are ideally matched by the foresight and craft of a benevolent Demiurge<sup>71</sup>. In this light, the inadequacy of the cardiocentric view, for Galen, becomes evident. The role of the encephalon is obviously misconstrued, since its supposed "cooling" function does not correspond to its actual location.

It is noteworthy that by appealing to the role of the Demiurge in the construction of the human body, Galen chooses to argue from the nature of providence to solve an issue related to the location of the *hegemonikon*<sup>72</sup>. It is my suggestion that Galen's shift of perspective from physiology to providence prompts al-Fārābī to follow his lead when constructing his answer. It is unlikely, however, that Galen's argument from design will appear convincing to al-Fārābī. The latter, as we have seen, believes that the activity of God is always self-oriented and the idea that this activity might include the direct design of sublunary bodies seems incongruous.

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<sup>70</sup> Galen suggests that the ideal location for the encephalon to fulfill a thermo-regulating is the thorax or the immediate vicinity of the heart, just by the lungs. May, *On the Usefulness of the Parts* cit., vol. I, pp. 387-88.

<sup>71</sup> This position is defended extensively in the *De Usu* and the *De Placitis Hippocratis et Platonis* (PHP). See, May, *On the Usefulness of the Parts* cit., vol. II, pp. 724-37 and Galen, *De Placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*, vol. I, ed. P. De Lacy, Akademie Verlag, Berlin 1978, pp. 589-99. On the Arabic version of the PHP see De Lacy's introduction pp. 42-46.

<sup>72</sup> It is important to note that the dispute over the location of the *hegemonikon* had several strands, the most significant related to the soul-body problem. The majority of Galen's polemics against the Stoics (notably Chrysippus) and the Aristotelians deal with this topic. On Chrysippus see, T. Tieleman, *Galen and Chrysippus on the Soul*, E. J. Brill, Leiden 1996, and R. Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2000, pp. 29-55, 93-121. In a similar vein, Alexander of Aphrodisias' arguments in favour of cardiocentrism in his *De Anima* are related to a more general defence of the Aristotelian position on the soul-body problem against Stoic and Galenic opposition. See, A. P. Fotinis, *The De Anima of Alexander of Aphrodisias: A translation and Commentary*, University Press of America, Washington 1979. R. W. Sharples, *On body, Soul and generation in Alexander of Aphrodisias*, "Apeiron", 27, 1994, pp. 163-70. There is considerably less work done on the topic of providence and the location of the *hegemonikon*.

However, al-Fārābī is not opposed to the thesis that providence plays a significant role at the biological level; rather, he offers an alternative answer which starts from his position on the topic and leads seamlessly to his hierarchical cardiocentrism. Thus, we know that for al-Fārābī, Divine providence obtains at the celestial and sublunary levels. We have also seen that a main feature of providence as justice is rank ordering or *tartīb*. For al-Fārābī, the cosmos is structured or ordered (*niẓām*) by emanating from the First in a scalar fashion. It seems natural in this context that the feature of hierarchy would lead al-Fārābī to adopt and develop a rigorously stratified form of cardiocentrism. The human body, by being related to the process of emanation, displays a just and providential constitution, one that is exemplified by the rule (*ri'āsa*) of the heart over each one of the subsidiary organs<sup>73</sup>. From this perspective, a defense of the subservient thermo-regulating role of the brain seems appropriate. It is simply a way for al-Fārābī to show that his view of providence as justice is compatible with the structure of human physiology.

## 2.1- From Hippocratic to Galenic Justice:

It is important to note, however that al-Fārābī's reception of Galen's work is not entirely negative. He accepts, with certain restrictions, Galen's broad recasting of Hippocrates' famous reference to justice in the *De Fracturis*<sup>74</sup>. In this treatise, the allusion to justice, as E. Savage-Smith rightly points out<sup>75</sup>, is intended in a very specific sense. The Hippocratic author

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<sup>73</sup> For al-Fārābī's description of the structural analogy between the order of the cosmos, the order of the body see, Fārābī, *Risāla fī a'ḍā' al-ḥayawān* cit., pp 82-85. Fārābī, *Perfect State* cit., pp. 231-37. In both cases, the city constitutes the third term of the analogy.

<sup>74</sup> Hippocrates, *Oeuvres Complètes*, vol. III, ed. E. Littré, J.B Baillière, Paris 1839-61, pp. 412-15. Bibliographical evidence indicates that an Arabic translation was produced see, F. Rosenthal, *An Eleventh-Century List of the Works of Hippocrates*, "Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences", 28, 2, 1973, pp. 156-165.

<sup>75</sup> Savage-Smith, *Galen on Nerves* cit., pp. 196-97.

employs this term to indicate the most appropriate or suitable setting to mend a fractured bone:

“In dislocation and fractures, the practitioner should make extensions in as straight a line as possible, for this is most just with nature; but if it inclines at all to either side, it should turn towards pronation rather than supination for the error is less.”<sup>76</sup>

However, throughout the *De Usu*, Galen makes use of this reference to substantiate the much wider claim that divine providence obtains at the physiological level. For instance, in the following excerpts, the “just” distribution of nerves, veins and arteries throughout the human body is taken to be a hallmark of demiurgic design.

I-“(a) I shall develop my discussion around the principle which I have stated in other treatises: that the nerves originate and spring from the brain, the arteries from the heart and the veins from the liver. It is necessary that all three of these instruments be distributed and dispersed throughout the entire body. So give me your attention and consider my description of their nature and the justness and equity of their distribution [...]. (b) Accordingly, large portions have been made to reach some parts and small portions others, and this is the case throughout the whole body. Therefore, since this is so, Hippocrates spoke the truth and deserves praise for the justice (*‘adl*) and equity (*inṣāf*) by which he characterized Nature. (c) Furthermore, since these instruments are apportioned according to justice (*‘adl*) and equity (*inṣāf*), in addition to which, as I have mentioned, they reach every part of the body safely, in good condition and having suffered no harm, we are compelled to characterize Nature not only by justice (*‘adl*) and equity (*inṣāf*), but also by evident skill, wisdom (*ḥikma*) and subtlety.”<sup>77</sup>

Interestingly, at I-(a), Galen links the just distribution of nerves, arteries and veins with the tri-partition of the soul. A key feature of the physiological dissemination of these channels is that each one of them originates from a

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<sup>76</sup> Translations slightly modified, see E. T. Withington, *Hippocrates Vol. III: On Wounds in the Head*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass 1957. pp. 95-96. For the various interpretative strategies adopted by Galen when commenting on Hippocrates see, G. E. R. Lloyd, *Methods and Problems in Greek science*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1991, pp. 398-416.

<sup>77</sup> Savage-Smith, *Galen on Nerves* cit., pp. 56-57, pp. 107-08. (The first set of numbers refers to the Arabic version, the second to Savage-Smith’s translation).

specific organ. The nerves stem from the encephalon, the veins issue from the liver and the arteries from the heart. Of course, each organ fulfills a specific function and uses the nerves, veins and arteries as instruments to carry out its purpose. Hence, the spinal medulla grows out of the brain and supplies nerves to the bodily parts below the head, but it supplies only those parts which can be useful to motion or sensation<sup>78</sup>. As a result, nerves are not found in organic components that do not play this role such as bones or cartilage. In this respect, it is the perfect fit between function or usefulness (*chreia*) and distribution that allows Galen to associate the idea of justice to that of demiurgic design or wisdom (*hikma*) at I-(c)<sup>79</sup>. The argument is developed in a painstakingly detailed fashion in the rest of *De Usu* XVI, 2-8 where Galen demonstrates how each nerve is perfectly allocated and serves a specific purpose (e.g. the optic, olfactory and auricular nerves).

In the same chapter, Galen uses a telling political or civil simile, which summarizes his point and brings it into sharp relief. The just distribution of nerves, arteries and veins throughout the body is compared to the sophisticated networks of aqueducts, reservoirs and conduits that insure the appropriate delivery of water to an urban population<sup>80</sup>. In this context, Galen suggests, at II-(a) that the idea of a just distribution goes hand in hand with that of skill and forethought. In other words, the optimal dispensation of a city's water supply depends on the expertise of those administering its hydraulic networks in the same way that the just distribution of nerves, veins and arteries in the body depends on the skill and foresight of the Demiurge. This kind of reasoning is typical of Galen and his reliance on the analogy

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., pp. 58-59, pp. 111-12.

<sup>79</sup> As used by Galen, "*chreia*" can mean purpose, utility, function or advantage. For a functionalist interpretation of "*chreia*" see, M. Shiefsky, *Galen's Teleology and Functional Explanation*, "Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy", 33, 2007, pp. 369-400. In Hunayn's version "*chreia*" is consistently translated by "*manfi'a*", see Savage-Smith, *Galen on Nerves* cit., pp.43-45.

<sup>80</sup> On Roman hydraulics see, H. B. Evans, *Water Distribution in Ancient Rome*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, MI 1994.

between human craft and demiurgic design is well-documented<sup>81</sup>.

Interestingly in this case, he associates expertise in the craft of civil administration to the application or practice of a specific kind of justice.

II—"In a similar way those people knowledgeable in the administration (*tadbīr*) and public service of towns operate their apportionment and allotment of the town's water supply in accordance with the best interest of the townspeople. For they make the stream as it comes from the spring in a large river and channel it, occasionally diverting some water to other places before it reaches the town. Then when the water reaches the town, they distribute it throughout the entire city (*madīna*) so that no district may lack a channel with a sufficient quantity of water flowing in it. (a) Now, the most praiseworthy of those performing this service for us is he who not only provides running water throughout the whole city, but also distributes and allots the supply with justice (*'adl*) and fairness. In the same way, we realize that these three instruments [viz. nerves, veins and arteries] are justly and fairly distributed and dispersed in the body as part of the work of Nature, then we must praise Nature and praise its Creator.

Now justice (*'adl*) and fairness are in a category of having two subdivisions, one of which the common public (*'awāmm*) knows, and the other known only to the wise and thoughtful; and we found that Nature preferred and elected the wisest of these two aspects. In view of this we must praise Nature even more. (b) If you wish to know the meaning of this aspect of justice (*'adl*), then you must refer to Plato and understand his statement in which he says that he who is ruling justly and is expert in administration (*mudabbiran*) ought to settle things according to merit (*istihqāq*). (c) In the same way, when water is distributed in a city, it is not apportioned to all its districts in equal volume or weight, but rather the share sent to the public baths (*ḥammāmāt*) and to places of worship (*'ibādat*) and prayer (*ṣalawāt*) is greater than the one sent to other places, or the portion allotted to homes in the streets, and markets and to private baths."<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> The occurrences of the analogy in the *De Usu* are far too numerous to be exhaustively catalogued. However, the analogy plays a significant role in *De Usu*, XVII, where Galen presents his teleological proof of God's existence. See, May, *On the Usefulness of the Parts* cit., vol. II, pp. 731-35. In the *PHP*, Galen puts the analogy to a similar use and introduces it almost in an axiomatic fashion: "Therefore, just as we form judgments about human molders, so we must also about the divine, and we must wonder about the craftsman who fashioned our body, whichever god he is. If because we do not see him we say that he does not exist, we shall no longer be preserving the similarity with judgments in the arts; there we did not make our judgment of the art depend on our seeing the person who has fitted together the ship or the couch, neglecting to look at the use of each part, but we made the latter inspection the crucial one". See Galen, *PHP*, vol. II, cit., pp. 597.

<sup>82</sup> Savage-Smith, *Galen on Nerves* cit., pp. 57-58, pp. 109-10. Translation slightly modified.

Clearly, part of the analogy's attraction for Galen resides as well in its ability to highlight the agreement between Platonic and Hippocratic forms of justice. Hence at II-(b), Galen explains that Nature's optimal dissemination of neural and cardiovascular pathways in the body exemplifies Plato's comments in the *Laws* VI, 757 b-c. In this passage the Athenian stranger, the dialogue's leading protagonist, initially distinguishes between numerical and proportional justice before concluding that the latter is preferable. His reasoning is fairly simple, unlike a straightforward numerical distribution, which gives equal shares to every individual; a proportional allotment takes into consideration the relative merit of each person. To paraphrase the Platonic recommendation: It is best to distribute more to what is greater and give smaller amounts to what is lesser and in this way preserve due proportion (*isonomia*)<sup>83</sup>.

In physiological terms, it means that the quantity of nerves, arteries and veins reaching the members of the body is not identical for all parts. Rather the exact number of nerves, veins and arteries allocated to each organ will depend on its specific needs and function. For instance, the amount of veins located in the bones of the ribcage, such as the scapula or the sternum, will seem trivial when compared to the quantity going to the lungs. The reasons for this are evident. According to Galen, the bones, because they are hard and without motion, require less nourishment than the lungs, which are moist and in constant activity<sup>84</sup>. Of course, the same reasoning is mirrored in the city's water system. Hence, proportional justice requires, at II- (c), that the quantity of water distributed to public and sacred places should be superior to the amount going to domestic or private quarters.

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<sup>83</sup> Plato, *Laws*, 757 b-c. For the translation see, Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. J. Cooper, Hackett Publishing, Indianapolis 1997, pp. 1433. Al-Fārābī discusses this passage very briefly in his paraphrase of the *Laws* see, Th.-A. Druart, *Le Sommaire du Livre des "Lois" de Platon*, in "Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales" 50. 1998, pp. 144-145.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 103-04, pp. 190-91. May, *On the Usefulness of the Parts* cit., vol. II, pp. 722-23.

As Armelle Debru aptly remarks, the connection made between the idea of just distribution or *isonomia* and the physiological organization of the body had become, by the Hellenistic period, a *communis opinio* shared by many philosophers and physicians<sup>85</sup>. However, what is interesting is that Galen has managed to draw on this received sentiment to advance specific elements of his Hippocratic and Platonic agenda. In fact, he has succeeded in adroitly tying together the notions of Demiurgic design, Natural justice and tri-partition. Partly, this helps explain why the influence of Galen's account was not limited to human anatomy or medicine. The *De Usu* specifically had a major impact on medieval philosophical and theological debates over the nature of creation and divine providence<sup>86</sup>. And although al-Fārābī is clearly sympathetic towards Galen's attempts to argue that justice obtains at the level of the human body, he is less impressed by the encephalocentric and tri-partite tenor of the entire project.

## 2.2- *Ri'āsa* and *Khidma* in the Farabian Body:

Al-Fārābī's resistance to Galen's vision is of course related to his commitment to Aristotelian physiology, embryology and psychology as presented in the *De Partibus Animalium* III, 4 the *De Generatione Animalium* II, 4 and the *De Anima* II and III. However, al-Fārābī does not rely exclusively on standard Peripatetic positions to develop his argument. This is all the more interesting, as many commentators defending cardiocentrism generally adopted a more conventional approach. This attitude is famously

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<sup>85</sup> A. Debru, *Le Corps Respirant: La Pensée Physiologique chez Galien*, E.J. Brill, Leiden 1996, pp. 164-65.

<sup>86</sup> A famous example where both concerns are merged appears in Galen's discussion of the length of eyelashes, which leads him to an analysis of Biblical creation and Divine providence. Galen's analysis of Mosaic cosmogony gave rise to a larger debate. See, May, *On the Usefulness of the Parts*, cit., vol. II, pp. 532-33. R. Walzer, *Galen on Jews and Christians*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1949. Maimonides, *Medical Aphorisms Treatise* 6-9, ed. G. Bos, Brigham Young University Press, Provo 2007. Galen's position on creationism is ambiguous; as David Sedley indicates, he exploits the tradition of pagan Creationism but he is at the same time non-committal. See, D. Sedley, *Creationism* cit., pp. 238-44.

epitomized by Alexander of Aphrodisias in the closing section of his treatise on the *De Anima*<sup>87</sup>. In this chapter, Alexander makes a series of claims to defend the importance of the heart in human physiology<sup>88</sup>. Many of them are directly inspired by Aristotle's biological writings. For instance, Alexander repeats the view that because nature places the most honorable part in the most honorable position, the heart's location in the center of the body explains its pre-eminence<sup>89</sup>. Similarly, Aristotle's embryological proof that the heart is the principle of movement because it is the source of heat plays a key role in Alexander's reasoning<sup>90</sup>. While al-Fārābī accepts and deploys many of these arguments, he builds his case against Galen by providing an interpretation of Aristotle's cardiocentrism that specifically focuses on the significance of hierarchical stratification (*tartīb*) amongst the ruling (*ra'ṭsiyya*) and serving (*khādima*) organs of the human body.

To make this line of reasoning more explicit, it might be helpful to turn to a concrete example of its use in the *Risāla fī a'ḍā' al-ḥayawān*. In the following excerpt, al-Fārābī correctly traces Galen's position on the soul to Plato's *Timaeus* 69 b-71 e. However, more relevant to our immediate concerns, is the way al-Fārābī contrasts the Platonic tri-partition of the soul with Aristotle's stratified cardiocentrism:

[A]-“(1) And both Timaeus and Plato believe that there are three kinds of rule (*ri'āsāt*) located in three organs and these are: the encephalon, the heart and the liver. And according to them, the spirited part is located in the heart, and the rational part is found in the encephalon. The sensitive faculty (*al-juz' al-ḥassās al-'awwal*) is also found in the brain along with that part of the soul which causes volitional movement (*al-ḥaraka al-irādiyya*) in animals. (2) These different forms of governing are not stratified (*tartaqī*) under the command of a single originating organ, but each governs what

<sup>87</sup> I. Bruns, *Alexandri Aphrodisiensis Praeter commentaria scripta minora*, G. Reimer, Berlin 1887, pp. 94-100. See as well, A. P. Fotinis, *De Anima of Alexander*, cit., pp. 125-136.

<sup>88</sup> See, P.-M. Morel, *Cardiocentrisme et antiplatonisme chez Aristote et Alexandre d'Aphrodise*, in *Plato, Aristotle or Both? Dialogues between Platonism and Aristotelianism in Antiquity*, eds. T. Bénatouïl, E. Maffi and F. Trabatttoni, George Olms, Hildesheim 2011, pp. 63-84.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., pp. 95-96. Arist., *PA.*, IV, 665 b 20.

<sup>90</sup> Arist. *GA.*, II, VI, 742 b 20- 743 b 30.



comes under its rule in a separate way (*munfaridūn*) determining the actions of its members independently. (3) But Aristotle believes that the ruling parts (*al-'ajzā' al-ra'īsa*) of the soul and its faculties are all located in the heart (*qalb*). And he believes that the nutritive and appetitive parts, as well as the rational part, the common sense (*al-juz' al-ḥassās al-'awwal*) and that part of the soul which causes volitional movement in animals are in the heart. (4) He also believes that the encephalon serves (*yakhdamu*) the heart and rules (*yar'usu*) other organs, and the liver also serves the heart and rules many other organs."<sup>91</sup>

First, it is important to note that al-Fārābī gives an encephalocentric interpretation of Plato's position by inaccurately stating that in the *Timaeus* the brain is said to contain the rational, volitional and sensitive faculties. In fact, Plato does not locate sense-perception in the head but rather places this faculty in the section of the body which is below the neck<sup>92</sup>.

Nevertheless, this interpretation allows al-Fārābī to weave into his case against the soul's tri-partition a rejection of encephalocentrism. This argument is introduced in a compressed manner at A-(2).

At first blush, it seems that al-Fārābī is simply describing the physiological configuration of tri-partition by stating that the soul's capacities are located in three different organs: the liver, heart and brain. However, upon closer scrutiny we come to see that al-Fārābī ushers in a critique of this position against the familiar background of hierarchy or *tartīb*. In fact, al-Fārābī seems to deplore the absence of stratification (*irtiqā'*) inherent in a tri-partite system. If the liver, heart and encephalon perform equally important tasks then there is no single controlling organ overseeing the management of the entire body. In this case, it is hard to tell which one of these three organs fulfils a ruling (*ri'āsa*) function and which one has a serving (*khidma*) role. As a result, according to al-Fārābī tri-partition seems to lead to an uncoordinated physiological system, where the liver, heart and brain govern separately (*munfaridūn*) over their relative spheres of influence.

<sup>91</sup> Fārābī, *Risāla fī a'ḍā' al-ḥayawān* cit., pp. 84-85.

<sup>92</sup> Plato, *Timaeus*, 68 d-e. This position is depicted accurately in Galen's paraphrase of the *Timaeus* see, P.Kraus, R. Walzer, eds. *Galen's Compendium Timaei Platonis*, Kraus Reprint, Nendeln 1973, pp. 22-24.

Compare this unruly state of affairs with the kind of order that prevails in Aristotelian cardiocentrism as interpreted by al-Fārābī in section A-(3). In this case, a stratified form of *ri'āsa* is readily apparent in the physiological structure of the human body. The heart, where the rational, nutritive, volitional and sensitive faculties are all located, is obviously the governing organ. It rules all and is ruled by none. As a result, the liver and brain occupy an intermediate position in this ranking; they serve the heart and rule over other inferior organs. These organs, al-Fārābī will later tell us are the spleen, lungs, intestines and genitalia. It is interesting to note that in section A-(4) al-Fārābī specifically uses the terminology of *khidma* and *ri'āsa* to depict the relationship between the heart and its subservient elements.

This hierarchical vision of cardiocentrism is also noticeable in al-Fārābī's account of embryology<sup>93</sup>. In the *Ārā' ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila* he underlines on numerous occasions the leading role played by the heart in foetal development<sup>94</sup>. Al-Fārābī's description of the human reproductive process closely follows that of Aristotle<sup>95</sup>. Drawing directly on the "First Teacher", he illustrates the relationship between semen and menses by appealing to the notorious 'curdled milk' metaphor employed in the *De Generatione Animalium* 739 b 20-25. Sperm, being the efficient cause, acts on the blood prepared within the uterus in the same way that rennet (*minfaḥa*) curdles fresh milk<sup>96</sup>. As a result of the interaction between material and efficient cause the embryo is formed and the first organ to appear is the heart. Al-Fārābī then suggests that this regent part directs the subsequent growth of the embryo.

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<sup>93</sup> For an overview of Islamic embryology see, C. Baffioni, *L'Embryologie Islamique Entre Héritage Grec et Coran : Les philosophes, les savants, les théologiens*, in *L'Embryon : Formation et Animation*, eds. L. Brisson, M. Congourdeau, J. Solère, J. Vrin, Paris 2008, pp. 213-231.

<sup>94</sup> Fārābī, *Perfect State* cit., pp. 186-187, pp. 192-193, pp. 234-235.

<sup>95</sup> Arist., *GA.*, II, VI, 731 b 20- 739 b 30.

<sup>96</sup> Fārābī, *Perfect State* cit., pp. 188-189.

More specifically, the formation (*takwīn*) of all the other bodily components is delayed until the requisite faculties (*quwwa/ dunamis*) are found in the *hegemonikon*<sup>97</sup>. Undoubtedly, al-Fārābī is hinting here at the appearance of the nutritive, sensitive and volitional powers in the heart. He is clearly implying that the network of serving (*khādima*) secondary and tertiary organs follows the presence of the ruling primary faculties in the *‘uḍwu al- ra’ṭsi*. It would seem then that the emergence of the ruling nutritive faculty (*al-quwwa al-ghādhīya al-ra’ṭsa*) in the heart, leads to the formation of subservient nutritive members (*al-a’ḍā’ al-khādima*) like the liver, stomach and kidneys<sup>98</sup>. Presumably, the same process takes place in the case of the other faculties. For instance, the chief sensitive power (*al-quwwa al-ḥāssa al-ra’ṭsa*) located in the heart would, in all likelihood, usher in the development of the five senses and their serving organs such as the eyes, ears and nose<sup>99</sup>. Based on this reasoning, al-Fārābī confidently asserts that the heart is not only the cause (*sabab*) of the existence of all the bodily parts but also the architect of their specific arrangement (*tartīb*)<sup>100</sup>.

### 2.3- *Ri’āsa* and *Khidma* in the Perfect City:

Al-Fārābī’s second argument for cardiocentrism in the *Risāla fī a’ḍā’ al-ḥayawān* focuses as well on the idea of hierarchical stratification (*tartīb*). To show that a single controlling organ should govern the body al-Fārābī appeals to an analogy between political and natural *khidma* and *ri’āsa*. Thus,

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., pp. 192-193.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., pp. 166-167.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., pp. 168-169.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., pp. 234-235. Of course, Galen is notoriously opposed to this cardiocentric view of embryology: “Why then did Chrisippus and many other Stoic and Peripatetic philosophers see fit to make these pronouncements about the heart, that it comes into being first of the animal parts, and that the other parts are formed by it? And that since it is first to be constructed it must necessarily be the source of veins and arteries as well? The clear evidence is that it is *not* the first to be formed.” See, Galen, *The Construction of the Embryo* in P. N. Singer, trans. & ed. *Galen: Selected Works*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1997, pp. 187-188. On Galen’s embryology see, D. Nickel, *Untersuchungen zur Embryologie Galens*, Akademie-Verlag, Berlin 1989.

he affirms, in the following excerpt, that according to Aristotle the body's physiological organization is essentially similar to the political structure of a city. This is of course a familiar image and we have seen how Galen has used a comparable metaphor to defend his understanding of justice in the body.

[B]-“(1) Aristotle believes that the natural kinds of ruling and serving (*khidma*) are similar to the voluntary kinds of ruling and serving. (2) They differ only in so far as the capacities and forms through which the voluntary kinds are enacted in the various parts of the city (*al-madīna*) do not come about naturally or through nature but rather through volition (*irāda*), habituation, study and constant practice.”<sup>101</sup>

Al-Fārābī follows up this analogy by a brief description of the kind of political order that should exist in a perfect Aristotelian city. Surprisingly, Aristotle's political doctrine, as presented by al-Fārābī, favours the institution of a stratified ideal monarchy. In this context, it is easy to see how a justification of cardiocentrism can be derived from such a simile. Indeed, according to al-Fārābī a single ruling organ, the heart, should govern the body in the same way that a single sovereign, the perfect king, rules the ideal city<sup>102</sup>. In each case the ruling element acts via a series of subservient parts or subordinate helpers to carry out its task. The heart governs the body through the help of the liver, brain and spleen and the king rules the city with the assistance of ministers, secretaries and soldiers. It is, of course, well known that Aristotle's *Politics* was unavailable in Arabic<sup>103</sup>. As a result sources for al-Fārābī's view on Aristotle's political doctrine should be sought in other components of the Aristotelian canon, notably in his biological work. An important section found

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<sup>101</sup> Fārābī, *Risāla fī a'qā' al-hayawān* cit., pp. 83-84

<sup>102</sup> This parallel is briefly discussed in Lutz Richter-Bernburg, *Abū Bakr al-Rāzī and al-Fārābī on Medicine and Authority in In the Age of al-Fārābī: Arabic Philosophy in Fourth/Tenth Century*, ed. P. Adamson, Warburg Institute, London 2008, pp. 119-30.

<sup>103</sup> See, R. Brague, *Notes sur la traduction Arabe de la Politique d'Aristote. Derechef, qu'elle n'existe pas*, in *Aristote Politique*, ed. P. Aubenque, Presse Universitaire de France, Paris 1993, pp. 423-33.

in the *De Motu Animalium*, X, 703 a 30-35 probably served as a basis for al-Fārābī's argument:

III-“We should consider the organization of an animal to resemble that of a city well-governed by laws (*eunomoumenen*). (1) For once order (*taxis*) is established in a city, there is no need of a separate monarch to preside over every activity; each man does his own work as assigned, and one thing follows another (2) because of habit. In animals this same thing happens because of nature: specifically because each part of them, since they are so ordered, is naturally disposed to do its own task. There is then no need of soul in each part: it is in some governing origin of the body and other parts live because they are naturally attached.”<sup>104</sup>

In excerpt [III], Aristotle describes the physiological organization of an animal's body in terms of the regime of a well-governed city. The context of this description is important, since Aristotle uses the analogy between the city and the body to argue for the necessity of a single physiological center to manage the animals' unified organism. Although in the *De Motu* Aristotle does not positively affirm that the heart plays this role, he still makes a number of strong suggestions in that direction<sup>105</sup>. In that sense, al-Fārābī's interpretation is not as far-fetched as it seemed *prima facie*. Furthermore, al-Fārābī's suggestion in B-(2) that volition and habit fulfill at the political level the role played by nature at the physiological level reflects Aristotle's similar

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<sup>104</sup> Arist., *De Motu*. X, 703 a 30-35, for the translation see, M. Nussbaum, *Aristotle's De Motu Animalium*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1978, pp. 52. There are no known Arabic versions of the *De Motu*. However, Arabic philosophers were aware of the existence of the *De Motu*, and might have had access, if not to the whole treatise, at least to a summary (ascribed simply to Nicolaus) from which Averroes quotes in his Long Commentary on the *De Anima*, see Averroes, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis De anima*, ed. F. S. Crawford, The Mediaeval Academy of America, Cambridge, Mass 1953, pp. 524. For the English translation of this passage see, Averroes, *Long Commentary on the De Anima*, ed. trans. R. C. Taylor, sub-ed. Th.-A. Druart, Yale University Press, New Haven 2009, pp. 422-423. Furthermore, as R. C. Taylor and Th.-A. Druart point out a similar reference occurs in Averroes' Middle Commentary of the *De Anima*. See, Averroes, *Middle Commentary on the De Anima*, ed. trans. A. L. Ivry, Brigham Young University Press, Provo, Utah 2002, pp. 128-129. According to H. J. Drossaart Lulofs, Averroes is probably referring in this section to the zoological part of the compendium of Aristotle's philosophy produced by Nicolaus of Damascus. See, Nicolaus of Damascus, *Nicolaus of Damascus on the Philosophy of Aristotle: Fragments of the First Five Books Translated from the Syriac*, ed. H. J. Drossaart Lulofs, E. J. Brill, Leiden 1965, pp. 11-12, 24, 32-34.

<sup>105</sup> See, Arist. *De Motu*, VIII, 702 a 20- b 25, 703 a 10- 20.

remark at III-(2). Finally, Aristotle's speculation at III-(1) that the absence of order in a city would require the presence of several monarchs overseeing different activities is strongly reminiscent of al-Fārābī's criticism of tri-partition as being a disunited form of physiological organization involving a series of separate rulers.

However, despite these similarities al-Fārābī's position emphasizes more substantially the importance of a hierarchical order in the city and the body. For instance, whereas Aristotle's text mentions only a city well governed by laws, al-Fārābī's interpretation speaks of a city ruled by a single monarch. And while Aristotle argues that the body should be viewed as a unified system, al-Fārābī insists that it is also a highly stratified structure. A good example of this attitude is al-Fārābī's description of the liver as a subordinate organ, which serves the heart in the same way that the commander of an army obediently serves his king<sup>106</sup>. Part of the reason for this is that Aristotle uses the comparison between the body and the city in the *De Motu* simply as a metaphor to illustrate an important physiological argument. Al-Fārābī's stance, on the other hand, assumes a much deeper correlation between the hierarchical structures of the body and the city and this, I believe, colors his interpretation of Aristotle's cardiocentrism. According to al-Fārābī, the ideal fit between the political and natural arrangements of *khidma* and *ri'āsa* is not simply fortuitous or convenient, but it is rather the result of the providential justice inherent in the emanative process of divine creation.

#### 2.4- *Riā'sa*, *Khidma* and Divine Providence:

In the *Ārā' ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, al-Fārābī goes to great lengths to establish this thesis. In his detailed description of the correspondence between the city and the body al-Fārābī especially emphasizes the similarity

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<sup>106</sup> Fārābī, *Risāla fī a'ḍā' al-ḥayawān* cit., pp. 85.

between their stratified compositions. Thus, in excerpts [C], [D] and [E] al-Fārābī explains how the different organs in the body and the various ranks in the city are ordered according to a precise correlation between their ruling and serving functions. It is important to note that in the following excerpts al-Fārābī compares two ideal models. He always talks of a virtuous city and a healthy body:

[C]-“ (1) The virtuous city resembles the perfect and healthy body, all of whose members co-operate to make the life of the animal perfect and to preserve it in this state. Now the members and organs of the body are different and their natural endowment and faculties are unequal in excellence, there being among them one ruling organ (*‘udwun ra’ṣi*), namely the heart, and organs which are close in rank (*martaba*) to that ruling organ. [...] Other organs, in turn, perform their functions according to the aim of those which are in the second rank (*rutba*), and so on until eventually organs are reached which only serve (*takhḍum*) and do not rule at all. (2) The same holds true in the case of the city. Its parts are different by nature, and their natural dispositions are unequal in excellence: there is a man who is the ruler (*ra’ṣ*), and there are others whose ranks (*marātibuhum*) are close to the ruler, each of them with a disposition and a habit through which he performs an action in conformity with the intention of that ruler; these are the holders of the first rank (*rutba*). Below them are people who perform their actions in accordance with the aims of those people; they are in the second rank. Below them in turn are people who perform their actions according to the aims of the people mentioned in the second instance, and the parts of the city continue to be hierarchically arranged (*tartīb*), until eventually parts are reached which perform their actions according to the aims of others, while there do not exist any people who perform their actions according to their aims; these, then are the people who serve (*yakhḍumūn*) without being served in turn, and who are hence in the lowest rank (*martaba*) and at the bottom of the scale.”

[D]- “(1) The part of the body close to the ruling organ (*‘udwun ra’ṣi*) performs the most honorable natural functions in agreement with the aims of the ruler [...], the organs beneath them perform those functions which are less noble, and eventually one reaches the organs that perform the lowest functions. In the same way the parts of the city which are close in authority to the ruler of the city perform the most noble voluntary actions, and those below them less noble actions, until eventually the parts are reached which perform the most base actions.[...] (2) This applies equally to the city and equally to every composite whole (*jumla*) whose parts are naturally united (*mu’talifa*), ordered (*muntaḍima*) and connected (*murtabi’a*): they have a ruler whose relation to the other parts is like the one just described ”

[E]- “(1) For just as the first ruler (*al-raʾīs al-ʾawwal*) in a genus cannot be ruled by anything in that genus-for instance the ruler of the [bodily] members cannot be ruled by any other member- and this holds good for any ruler of any composite whole (*jumla*), (2) so the art of the ruler in the excellent city of necessity cannot be an art that serves (*yukhdima*) any other art and cannot be ruled by any other art”<sup>107</sup>

At E-(1) and D-(2) al-Fārābī introduces a significant mereological argument which helps buttress the ladder-like architecture (*tartīb*) apparent in the city and the body. He affirms, rather matter-of-factly, that the first ruler (*al-raʾīs al-ʾawwal*) in a genus cannot serve lesser elements contained in that same genus. More precisely, it would appear that this principle applies only to composite wholes (*jumla*). Now, given the examples used one might think that al-Fārābī believes that this is true of the entire class of composite wholes, including continuous, contiguous and discrete wholes. In other words, any entity made up of parts will be ruled by a single leading element. Presumably, however this can only be true of composite wholes that possess a coherent structure or hierarchy. Indeed, a body of water, such as a lake or a pond for instance, cannot be ruled by a single “commanding” particle of liquid. But it is nonetheless a contiguous whole. For this reason, I think that it is important to realize that when al-Fārābī talks of a *jumla*, which is united (*muʿtalifa*), ordered (*muntazima*) and connected (*murtabiʿa*), he means to speak only of composite wholes that have a configuration with clear ruling and serving elements.

When this mereological principle is applied to the organization of the body and the city, the outcome is predictable. The heart, being the chief organ within the body, will not serve any other corporeal member but will rule them all. The virtuous king, who is the most excellent citizen in the ideal city, will similarly govern all of its inhabitants. As a consequence, the functional structure of the body and the city will have an obvious pyramidal

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<sup>107</sup> For excerpts [C]-[E] see, Fārābī, *Perfect State* cit., pp. 230-31, pp. 236-37, pp. 240-41. All translations slightly modified.



configuration (*tartīb*) distinguished by several ranks (*martaba*). At the top, the highest level of *ri'āsa* will belong to a single element, which directs all the others and is directed by none. This first rank (*rutba 'ulā*) is followed by a series of intermediary echelons that contain many components, which can be both ruling and serving. These components act in accordance with the commands of the first ruler and transmit orders to more subservient parts. Hence from the highest level of *ri'āsa* we slowly move in a descending succession to layers that are more and more subordinate until we reach the lowest level. This is the level of pure *khidma* and it can contain multiple elements, which in al-Fārābī's formulation, always serve and never rule.

This hierarchical pattern is of course reminiscent of the just providential order that exists in the universe. In chapter one, section four we have already established that the scalar structure (*tartīb*) of the world was a feature of the attribute of justice (*'adl*) emanating from the First's substance. For this reason, each being receives its allotted share (*quṣṭa*) of existence and its rank (*rutba*) in the general order of the world (*niẓām*). This order ensures that 'being' (*wujūd*) is justly distributed among all the existents. It flows (*fayḍ*) from the First and proceeds via the intellects and through the celestial spheres all the way to the sublunary world where it is parcelled in smaller and smaller quantities amongst rational and irrational animals, vegetables and the elements until it finally reaches the lowest constituent of existence: prime matter. In section [F] al-Fārābī completes his description of this process by adding an important detail. It appears from F-(1) that the justice (*'adl*) which emanates from the First contributes not only to the ranking of each existent, but provides as well the structure of their mereological composition.

[F]-(1) The First's substance is also such that the existents, when they have issued from it in their ranks (*rutba*), are necessarily united (*ya'talif*), connected (*yartabiṭ*) and ordered (*yantazim*) with one another and arranged in a way that they become a composite whole (*jumla*) and are established like one thing. (2) Some of them are connected and united by something

within their substance, so that their substances (*jawāhiriḥā*) to which they owe their existence produce their connection and their union; others by modes (*aḥwāl*) which accompany their substances [...]. These modes (*aḥwāl*) of theirs are also derived from the First, because its substance is such that many existents receive from it together with their substance the modes by which they are connected (*yartabiṭu*), united (*ya'talifu*) and ordered (*yantaẓimu*) with each other"<sup>108</sup>

When using expressions such as *ya'talif*, *yartabiṭ* and *yantaẓim*, al-Fārābī is obviously suggesting that all the different types of hierarchized or ordered composite wholes (whether they are continuous, contiguous or discrete) derive their organization from the substance of the First Being<sup>109</sup>. It is also evident that a significant feature of this structure relates to the hierarchical arrangement of the various parts. Consequently, it would appear that al-Fārābī believes that the mereological principle adduced earlier at E-(1) and D-(2) is associated as well to the feature of justice (*'adl*) inherent in the First Being's substance. This would go a long way toward explaining why al-Fārābī simply assumes the validity of this principle in the earlier discussion on the ruling and serving parts of the city and the body.

## 2.5- From Galenic to Farabian Justice:

Similarly, if we return to the *Risāla fī a'ḍā' al-ḥayawān*, we can see that the complex arguments deployed in the *Ārā' ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila* inform to a large extent al-Fārābī's interpretation of Aristotle's cardiocentrism. In fact, al-Fārābī attributes to the "First Teacher" a line of thought based entirely on the analogy between the ruling configuration of the city, body and cosmos:

[G]-"And he [Aristotle] also believes that the rule (*ri'āsatu*) that sustains the order of the world and its parts, and the rule (*ri'āsatu*) that ought and needs to sustain the order of the city and its segments and the rule (*riā'satu*) that

<sup>108</sup> For excerpts [F] see, Fārābī, *Perfect State* cit., pp. 96-97. Translations slightly modified.

<sup>109</sup> The Arabic translation of Themistius' paraphrase of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Λ contains the same sort of vocabulary when referring to various composite wholes, see note 108.

sustains the order of the body and its members are analogous (*mutanāsiba*) and similar (*mutashābiha*). And just as the rule that sustains the world and its parts is stratified (*tartaqī*) according to a ranking (*tartīb*) topped by the rule of a single ruler (*raʾīs*), alone in its being, whose rule is shared by no one [...] in the same way, he believes that the rulerships among the cities and nations should be stratified (*tartaqī*) towards the rule of a single ruler, alone in his rank (*rutba*) [...]. And in the same way, he believes that the various rules found in multiple members of the body, are necessarily stratified (*tartaqī*) according to a ranking (*tartīb*) culminating in the rule (*riʾāsa*) of a single organ, unique in its rank (*rutba*).<sup>110</sup>

The resemblance of Aristotle's opinion as presented in [G] and al-Fārābī's argument in the *Ārā'* is evident. In both instances, the structure of the city and the body takes the shape of a highly stratified pyramidal arrangement. In both texts this order is ruled by a single organ or element, which has a complete monopoly over its subservient parts. The terminology is also remarkably familiar, in each case the structures of the body and the city are understood in terms of *tartīb*, and *riʾāsa*. Finally, these notions help ground the argument for cardiocentrism in the two inquiries. Hence, according to al-Fārābī, Aristotle believes that the pyramidal stratification (*tartīb*) characteristic of the cosmic structure ought to obtain at the political and biological levels. As a result, the various physiological functions distributed throughout the body must all be stratified under the rule (*riʾāsa*) of a single organ: the heart.

The remote background for al-Fārābī's interpretation of Aristotle's view on *riʾāsa* is most likely furnished by *Metaphysics* Λ, 10. In particular, al-Fārābī's insistence on the importance of having a single ruler would seem to take as its point of departure Aristotle's well-known quotation from the *Iliad*, II, 204 concerning the appropriate number of principles in the universe: "There is no good (*lā khayra*) in a multiplicity of rulers, the ruler (*raʾīs*) is one"<sup>111</sup>. A further source of inspiration for al-Fārābī's reading could be

<sup>110</sup> Fārābī, *Risāla fī a'qā' al-ḥayawān* cit., pp. 84.

<sup>111</sup> See, Arist., *Metaph.* XII, 1076 a 5. For the Arabic version, see Averroes, *Tafsīr Mā Ba'd Aṭ-ṭabīʿat: Grand Commentaire de la Métaphysique*, vol. III, ed. M. Bouyges, Imprimerie Catholique, Beirut, 1948, pp. 1736. On the different translations of the *Metaphysics*

Themistius' paraphrase of *Metaphysics* Lambda. The paraphrase is believed to have accompanied Abū Bishr Mattā's translation of Lambda and al-Fārābī affirms in his *Fī Aghrāḍ* that it is the only complete commentary on this book that is known to him<sup>112</sup>. While discussing the role of substance in *Metaphysics* Lambda 1069 a 17-25 1035 b 25, Themistius draws a similar analogy between the unity of the universe (*al-kull*), the structure of the bodily parts and the order of a city<sup>113</sup>. In addition, in the closing section of his

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available in Arabic see, A. Bertolacci, *On the Arabic Translations of Aristotle's Metaphysics*, "Arabic Science and Philosophy", 15, 2005, pp. 241-75. Interestingly, *Metaphysics* Λ, 10 and specifically section 1075 a10-25 were viewed by the exegetical tradition as a privileged source for the construction of an Aristotelian theory of providence. For instance, in the *Tafsīr mā ba'da al-ṭabī'a*, Averroes says that Aristotle's famous comparisons of cosmic order to the structures of an army and of a household contains his opinion on *'ināya*". See, Averroes, *Tafsīr* cit., pp. 1714-15. For Averroes's view on providence and sublunary generation see, G. Freundenthal, *The Medieval Astrologization of Aristotle's Biology: Averroes on the role of the celestial bodies in the generation of animate beings*, "Arabic Sciences and Philosophy" 12, 2002, pp. 111-137. This tradition certainly goes back to the work of Alexander of Aphrodisias on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Averroes and al-Fārābī had access to Alexander's lost commentary on the *Metaphysics* in Abū Bishr Mattā's translation and probably to his *De Principiis* as well. For the relationship between the *De Principiis* and Alexander's lost commentary on the *Metaphysics* see, S. Fazzo, *L'Exégèse du Livre Lambda de la Métaphysique D'Aristote dans le De Principiis et la Quaestio I.1 d'Alexandre d'Aphrodise*, "Laval Théologique et Philosophique", 64, 2008, pp. 607-26. For an analysis of the different Arabic translations of the *De Principiis*, see, C. Genequand, *Alexander of Aphrodisias: On the Cosmos*, E. J. Brill, Leiden 2001, pp. 31-35.

<sup>112</sup> Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Fī Aghrāḍ al-Ḥakīm fī kullī maqāla min al-kitāb al-mawsūm bi-l-ḥurūf*, in *Alfarabi's philosophische Abhandlungen*, ed. F. Dieterici, E.J. Brill, Leiden 1892, pp. 34-38. See as well, Th.-A. Druart, *Le traité d'al-Fārābī sur les buts de la Métaphysique d'Aristote*, "Bulletin de Philosophie Médiévale", 24, 1982, pp. 38-43. A partial English translation of this text along with comments is also available in D. Gutas' classical study of Avicenna. See, D. Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition: Introduction to Reading Avicenna's Philosophical Works*, E. J. Brill, Leiden 1988, pp. 240-242.

<sup>113</sup> The specific passage from Themistius' paraphrase is worth quoting in full: "The unity of the universe (*al-kull*), whether it is like the unity (*'itihād*) of the members of the human body and the parts of plants, or the composition (*tarkīb*) of contiguous parts like those of a house or a boat, or the concord (*ta'ālf*) of separated elements like the concord of soldiers or a city (*al-madīna*), the first part of this unity is substance (*jawhar*), which stands towards the whole like the heart (*qalb*) towards the rest of the animal's body." This fragment of Themistius's lost original commentary survives in Arabic and is cited by Averroes in his *Great Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, see, Averroes, *Tafsīr Mā Ba'd Aṭ-ṭabī'at* cit., pp. 1410. For a reconstruction of Themistius' commentary on the basis of Arabic and Hebrew sources see, R. Bague, *Thémistius: Paraphrase de la Métaphysique d'Aristote (livre lambda)*, J. Vrin, Paris 1999.

commentary Themistius echoes this sentiment by claiming that all things aspire to be ruled by a single principle<sup>114</sup>.

The importance of this cosmic argument is also apparent in the physiological vocabulary al-Fārābī chooses to employ. As Richard Walzer perceptively suggests, the terms used to describe thermal adjustment and regulation (*'i'tidāl*, *'addala*) are reminiscent of the justice (*'adl*) that prevails in the order of the universe<sup>115</sup>. In light of this, it is interesting to see how al-Fārābī fits certain biological justifications of thermo-regulation within his overall case for stratified cardiocentrism and divine providence:

[J]-“The heart is the ruling organ which is not ruled by any other organ of the body. It is followed in rank by the brain, which is also a ruling organ, but its rule is secondary rather than primary: it is ruled by the heart and rules over all the other organs and limbs. For it serves the heart, whereas all the other organs and members are its servants, in accordance with the natural aims of the heart. It [the brain] may be compared to the steward in a household; for the steward himself is subordinate to the master, whereas the other members of the house serve him in accordance with the aims of the master.”

[K]-“For since the heart is the source of the innate heat, its heat must necessarily be made strong and excessive so that it can produce a surplus which overflows (*yufīḍu*) to the other parts of the body, and does not fail or weaken. The organs by themselves do not suffice to regulate (*tu'adil*) their heat, which the heart sends forth into them [...]. Thus, to this end the brain was made cool and moist, even to the touch, in comparison with the other part of the body and a faculty was placed in it by which a definite and complete adjustment (*'i'tidāl*) of the heart's heat is brought about.”<sup>116</sup>

In passage [K], al-Fārābī deploys the classical Aristotelian view that the heart is the source of innate heat (*ḥarāra gharīziyya*) to warrant the brain's subservient function. This heat spreads to all the other organs and as a result it nourishes and controls their activities. However, the heart is served in this task by the encephalon which being colder and more humid than all

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<sup>114</sup> R. Brague, *Thémistius* cit., pp. 118-119.

<sup>115</sup> Fārābī, *Perfect State* cit., pp. 394-395.

<sup>116</sup> For excerpts [J] and [K] see, Fārābī, *Perfect State* cit., pp. 174-75, pp. 179-81.

the other organs regulates the temperature going into each member. In the *Risāla fī a'ḍā' al-ḥayawān*, al-Fārābī offers a more ample discussion of this issue. He carefully explains how the thermal adjustment (*ta'dīl*) provided by the brain should not be confused with the ventilation or aeration (*tarwīḥ*) dispensed by the lungs. Aeration is meant to help the process of concoction (*pepsis*) by insuring the regular supply of fresh air to the heart as well as the evacuation of putrid *pneuma* (*ruḥan 'afnan*)<sup>117</sup>. This is an important function but one evidently different from the careful monitoring of temperature exercised by the brain.

Al-Fārābī indicates that the moderation of cardiac heat takes place principally by counter-balancing the drying and caloric nature of the *ḥarāra gharīziyya* with the assistance of the brain's cooling and moisturizing qualities. This has beneficial effects notably on various fragile viscous bodily parts like muscle, cartilage as well as on a number of earthy components like the sensory and motor nerves. Importantly, in the case of the nerves, al-Fārābī adds that the brain helps preserve their pliability and moisture by also altering the composition of the heart's vital *pneuma* (*rūḥ ḥayawānī gharīzī*). After its passage or transit (*sālik*) through the encephalon the vital *pneuma*, al-Fārābī suggests, is refrigerated and as a result it is deprived of its smouldering and smoky nature (*dukhāniyya*)<sup>118</sup>.

Interestingly, these explanations allow al-Fārābī to construct a successful response to Galen's initial objections to the brain's subordinate role. As we have already seen in this chapter's opening section, Galen tries to saddle his cardiocentric opponents with an embarrassing paradox. He argues that if the brain's location were suitably fitted to its alleged thermo-regulating function (*chreia/ manfa'a*) then the encephalon would have to be

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<sup>117</sup> Fārābī, *Risāla fī a'ḍā' al-ḥayawān* cit., pp. 96-99. On concoction see the section entitled 'The Master Cook' in G. E. R. Lloyd, *Aristotelian Explorations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1996, pp. 83-103.

<sup>118</sup> Fārābī, *Perfect State* cit., pp. 180-82.

placed much nearer to the heart rather than in the cranial cavity<sup>119</sup>. Galen then adds, with characteristic sarcasm, that the thermo-regulating teachings are so absurd and opposed to Nature that, by following their twisted logic, one could easily conclude that even the heels were formed for the sake of cooling the cardiac heat. Visibly, Galen considers the sizeable distance that separates the cranial cavity from the heart to be a major chink in the cardiocentrists' armour.

Al-Fārābī, instead of recoiling from this challenge, responds by exploiting the apparent weakness to his advantage. He explains that the interval that exists between the encephalon and the heart, far from being superfluous, serves a specific purpose. It acts as a buffer zone and allows the excessive temperature (*ḥarāra shadīda*) emanating from the bosom of sanguineous animals to dissipate gradually. If this were not the case, the physiological result would be disastrous. Indeed, had the encephalon been located within the ribcage as Galen suggested, it would entirely dry up and lose all of its natural moisture by being too closely exposed to the full intensity of cardiac heat. In other words, the brain's actual location within the cranial cavity allows it to retain its inherent cooling attributes and to perform its subordinate thermo-regulating function appropriately<sup>120</sup>.

In that sense, Aristotelian physiology as interpreted by al-Fārābī corroborates the wide-ranging arguments from *tartīb*, such as the one presented in [J]. Indeed, the brain's thermo-regulating function as well as its cranial location reflect the hierarchical ruling and serving patterns that are supposed to obtain in the body, city and cosmos. Thus, the encephalon occupies a clear position in the corporeal structure; its rank (*rutba*) follows that of the heart. It is therefore subservient (*khādim*) to the *hegemonikon* and helps it direct other organs by carrying out its bidding like an obedient and loyal steward in al-Fārābī's memorable image. In many ways, this

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<sup>119</sup> May, *On the Usefulness of the Parts* cit., vol. I, pp. 387-88.

<sup>120</sup> Fārābī, *Risāla fī a'dā' al-ḥayawān* cit., pp. 96-97.

agreement between biological and cosmic structures puts to rest Galen's claim that cardiocentrism betrays the order of nature and the providential design and skill of the Divine craftsman. In all likelihood, al-Fārābī wants us to see that, on the contrary, when providence is rightly understood as justice (*'adl*), it is Galen's tri-partite encephalocentrism that seems unsuitable. This is true, at least in al-Fārābī's tendentious presentation of this doctrine as a disunited and chaotic physiological system. To be sure, the view that there are three separate and seemingly independent governing organs in the human body does not square well with the Farabian idea of providence which calls for a perfect compatibility between the cosmic, corporeal and political orders, each ruled by a single dominant principle: The First Being, the heart and the virtuous king.

## 2.6 Theology, Medicine and Philosophy:

Interestingly, al-Fārābī's defence of cardiocentrism helps undermine certain theological positions based on Galen's physiology. Part of the reason for this is that the overlapping discussion of human physiology and providence constituted a central feature of Ancient and Medieval controversies over the nature of creation<sup>121</sup>. In that context Galen's argument from design, particularly as presented in the *De Usu*<sup>122</sup>, was a major source of authority for the creationist agenda of the early *Mutakallimūn* and their successors<sup>123</sup>. For instance, when al-Ghazālī marvels at the intricate design of a gnat or a bed bug and offers its perfect composition as a

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<sup>121</sup> See, D. Sedley, *Creationism and its Critics in Antiquity*, University of California Press, Berkeley 2009 and R. Sorabji, *Time, Creation and the Continuum*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1983, pp. 193-321.

<sup>122</sup> See, J. Schacht, *New Sources for the History of Muhammadan Theology*, "Studia Islamica" 1, 1953, pp. 23-42.

<sup>123</sup> See, A. Shihadeh, *The Existence of God*, in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, ed. T. Winter, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2008, pp. 197-218.



sign of Divine creation<sup>124</sup>, he is simply appealing to a standard Galenic trope, one that had already been perfected by al-Jāḥiẓ in his *Kitab al-Ḥayawān*<sup>125</sup>. Furthermore, as F.W. Zimmermann has noted, the intellectual prestige of Galen, in the cultural milieu of 10<sup>th</sup> century Baghdad, rivalled and even exceeded that of Aristotle<sup>126</sup>. For that reason, al-Fārābī's opposition to Galen's encephalocentrism should be appreciated within the context of the on-going debates between philosophy and medicine in the Abbasid capital.

The practitioners of each discipline were vying for intellectual dominance and both sides were trying to establish their field as being more authoritative. Interestingly, some of the arguments on the medical side nicely blended scientific and providential themes by appealing to the idea of premonitory dreams. Thus, Ishāq Ibn Alī al-Ruhāwī calls on the famous episode where Galen learned how to cure his chronic abdominal pain through an oneiric vision to establish the superiority of the medical profession<sup>127</sup>. Indeed, al-Ruhāwī suggests that when Galen dreams that he should excise a vein between his thumb and index finger, this therapeutic suggestion is of Divine origin and indicates God's solicitude and care for the physician's noble mission<sup>128</sup>.

On the philosophical side, Silvia Fazzo has shown that a number of classical anti-Galenic arguments can be traced back to the Baghdad School. The polemical character of certain remarks was heightened and read back into the Greek sources, notably in the adaptation of works attributed to

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<sup>124</sup> al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, vol. 4, al-Maṭba'ah al-'Uthmānīyah al-Miṣrīyah, Cairo 1933, pp. 273-275.

<sup>125</sup> al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitab al-Ḥayawān*, vol. 7, ed. M. Hārūn, Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, Cairo 1938-1945, pp. 169.

<sup>126</sup> F.W. Zimmermann, *Al-Farabi und die philosophische Kritik an Galen von Alexander zu Averroes*, in *Akten des VII Kongresses für Arabistik und Islamwissenschaft*, Göttingen, 1976, pp. 401-14.

<sup>127</sup> Ishāq Ibn Alī al-Ruhāwī, *Medical Ethics of Medieval Islam with Special Reference to Adab al-ṭabīb*, trans. M. Levey, The American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia 1967, pp. 70-71.

<sup>128</sup> On the Divine nature of premonitory dreams see, R. Hansberger, *How Aristotle Came to Believe in God-given Dreams: The Arabic Version of 'De divinatione per somnum'*, in *Dreaming Across Boundaries: The Interpretation of Dreams in Islamic Lands*, ed. L. Marlow, Center for Hellenic Studies, Cambridge, Mass., 2008, pp. 50-77.

Alexander of Aphrodisias<sup>129</sup>. Many of these arguments centred on Galen's critical opinion of a number of elements in Aristotle's physics and biology. Often the critiques found in the sources identified by Fazzo resulted in a belittling of Galen's philosophical abilities and were characterized by *ad hominem* attacks on his competence outside the field of medicine. These kinds of remarks and the perspective they defend are well exemplified by a jibe reported in al-ʿĀmirī's *Kitāb al-Amad 'alā l'Abād*. In this text, Galen is admonished to go back to his ointments, laxatives, and to treating sores and fevers rather than dabbling in important philosophical questions concerning the eternity of the world or the nature of the soul<sup>130</sup>.

In this perspective, al-Fārābī's defence of Aristotelian cardiocentrism in the *Ārā' ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila* enables him to advance several elements in his philosophical agenda. It allows al-Fārābī to subtly develop his view of providence as justice and the concomitant rejection of Galenic encephalocentrism helps nudge the balance of power in Baghdad's intellectual circles in favour of Aristotle and philosophy and away from Galen and medical practitioners<sup>131</sup>. And as we shall see, al-Fārābī will ultimately co-opt the prestige associated with the medical sciences when, in a bold move, he models the virtuous civil craft on the art of the expert physician. But before reaching this stage of my argument, I shall first need to examine the nature of justice in the ideal polity.

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<sup>129</sup> See. S. Fazzo, *Alexandre d'Aphrodise contre Galien: La Naissance d'une Légende*. "Philosophie Antiqué", 2, 2002, pp. 109-144.

<sup>130</sup> See, S. Stroumsa, *Al-Fārābī and Maimonides on Medicine as a Science*, "Arabic Sciences and Philosophy" 3, 1993, pp. 235-249. For al-ʿĀmirī's text quoted by Stroumsa see, E. K. Rowson, *A Muslim Philosopher on the Soul and its Fate: Al-ʿĀmirī's Kitāb al-Amad 'alā l'Abad*, American Oriental Society, New Haven 1988, pp. 74-75.

<sup>131</sup> The stake lurking behind all of these polemics is the scientific status of medicine and its dependence on the higher philosophical disciplines of physics to establish its principles. For an illuminating analysis of the classification of medicine in Arabic philosophy see, D. Gutas, *Medical Theory and Scientific Method in the Age of Avicenna*, in *Before and After Avicenna*, ed. D. Reisman, E.J. Brill, Leiden 2003, pp. 145-162. E. Gannagé, in a recent article highlights the attempt by later physicians to free themselves from this methodological subordination see, E. Gannagé, *Médecine et Philosophie à Damas à l'aube du XIIème siècle: Un tournant post-avicennien?*, "Oriens", 39, 2011, pp. 227-256.

### Chapter Three:

#### Cosmic Justice and Dispositional Hierarchy in the Virtuous City

In aphorisms sixty to sixty-five of the *Fuṣūl Muntaza'a*<sup>132</sup>, al-Fārābī introduces his conception of justice in the virtuous city by adapting a series of arguments from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*<sup>133</sup>. One of these arguments relates to Aristotle's famous description of friendship in terms of virtue, pleasure and use<sup>134</sup>. This discussion informs al-Fārābī's account of the political fellowship that unites and connects the residents of the ideal city. Thus, al-Fārābī argues that the city's primary political bond is born out of a friendship (*maḥabba*) which is for the sake of virtue (*faḍīla*). This founding sentiment is then strengthened by two subsidiary kinds of friendly attitudes. The first kind emerges from the utility (*manfi'a*) the citizens derive

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<sup>132</sup> Fārābī, *Fuṣūl* cit., pp 70-71.

<sup>133</sup> For a survey of al-Fārābī's reception of the *Nicomachean Ethics* see, M. Fakhry, *Ethical Theories in Islam*, E. J. Brill, Leiden 1991, pp. 78-85. See as well, the introduction in D. Mallet, *Le Rappel de la Voie à Suivre pour Parvenir au Bonheur de Abū Nasr al-Fārābī*, "Bulletin d' Études Orientales", 39-40, 1987-88, pp. 113-140. See also the introduction in D.M. Dunlop, *The Arabic Version of the Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. A. Akasoy, A. Fidora, E.J. Brill, Leiden 2005, pp. 5-19, 35-55, 85-94. Dunlop concludes that al-Fārābī is likely to have relied on Ishāq Ibn Hunayn's Arabic version as the basis for his lost commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Al-Fārābī's lost commentary is famously quoted by Ibn Ṭufayl in the introduction of his *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān* where the *Second Master* is accused of limiting human happiness to political flourishing. Ibn Bājjah defends al-Fārābī against this charge. For a useful overview of the polemic between Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Bājjah see, P. Vallat, *Farabi et L'École d' Alexandrie*, J. Vrin, Paris 2004, pp. 102-126.

<sup>134</sup> Arist. N.E. VIII, 2-3. For the Arabic versions see, Dunlop, *Arabic Nicomachean Ethics* cit., pp. 428-437. John Cooper famously argued that the two lower forms of friendships (utility-friendship and pleasure-friendship) could be as disinterested as the highest form (virtue-friendship). See, J. Cooper, *Aristotle on the Forms of Friendship*, "Review of Metaphysics", 30, 4, 1977, pp. 619-648. For a revision of Cooper's argument see, K. Alpern, *Aristotle on the Friendship of Utility and Pleasure*, "Journal of the History of Philosophy", 21, 1983, pp. 303-315. Al-Fārābī's argument seems more subtle, in the sense that, for him the relative quality of each form of friendship cannot be judged irrespective of the political situation in which it takes place. Within the context of the virtuous city, al-Fārābī would most likely agree with Cooper's position.

from their mutual dealings and the second arises from the pleasure (*ladhdha*) they experience during their reciprocal interactions<sup>135</sup>.

Despite, the obvious influence of Aristotle's analysis of friendship, al-Fārābī's fuller account of *maḥabba* contains some distinctly un-Aristotelian elements. Notably, in the *Ārā' ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, al-Fārābī describes the origin of human friendship by appealing to the idea of providence<sup>136</sup>. We briefly touched on this topic in the preceding chapter (2.4-[F]), during our examination of al-Fārābī's views on the formation and ordering of composite wholes and their parts. In the same section, al-Fārābī argues that *maḥabba* is a feature of divine justice and that its specific function is to unite (*ta'talif*) and connect (*tartabīṭ*) mankind into a composite whole i.e. a city.

By deriving the existence of friendship in this manner, al-Fārābī gestures towards the possibility that divine providence might promote or justify the existence of a certain type of political associations, notably that of the virtuous polity. But how can the existence of an ideal human association be related to divine care? In answering this question al-Fārābī must avoid

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<sup>135</sup> "In the [virtuous] city, friendship occurs for the sake of sharing in virtue and that is connected with sharing in opinion (*'ittifāq al-ra'y*) and action (*af'āl*). [...] When the opinions of the inhabitants of the [virtuous] city are agreed on these things and are completed by the actions by which they mutually gain happiness, they necessarily become mutual friends. [...] Then because they are neighbours of one another in one dwelling place, some of them needing others and some being useful to others, there follows friendship which exists on account of utility. Then on account of their sharing in virtue and because some of them are useful to others and some of them take pleasure in others, there follows as well friendship which exists on account of pleasure. And in this way, they are united and connected". Translation slightly modified, see D. M. Dunlop, *Al-Fārābī: Fuṣūl al-Madānī* ("Aphorisms of the Statesman"), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1961, pp. 52-53. It might not be immediately clear how friendship (*maḥabba*) is connected to the notion of "sharing in opinion" (*'ittifāq al-ra'y*). To understand how these two ideas are related one should simply turn to the Arabic version of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*: "It appears that agreement of opinion (*'ittifāq al-ra'y*) is friendly also. Hence it is not agreement in intention, for this exists among those who do not even know each other. [...] [But] agreement in action (*af'āl*), and that concerning great matters, and able to be realized by both or all parties: as in cities when all agree that the rulerships (*rī'asāt*) shall be virtuous (*faḍā'il*)". See, Arist., *NE.*, IX, 6, 1167 a-b. For the Arabic version see, Dunlop, *Arabic Nicomachean Ethics* cit., pp. 502-03. Translation modified. As is evident from excerpts above, Ishāq Ibn Ḥunayn systematically uses the Arabic expression *'ittifāq al-ra'y* to render the Aristotelian term for concord or political friendship: "*homonoia*".

<sup>136</sup> Fārābī, *Perfect State* cit., pp. 96-97.

two important difficulties. The first hurdle that presents itself is that of theological determinism<sup>137</sup>. This view was defended by many of al-Fārābī's contemporaries, specifically a number of *Mutakallimūn* who denied free will and extended divine agency and concern to particulars<sup>138</sup>. The second obstacle derives from the opposite thesis, broadly associated with Epicurean indeterminism<sup>139</sup>. As presented by al-Fārābī, this position rejects altogether the existence of providence and argues against the reality of an ordered universe with stable entities or substances; instead all things are said to be the result of sheer randomness and chance<sup>140</sup>.

From a political as well as an ethical perspective, both views lead to undesirable conclusions. By insisting that all events are providentially

<sup>137</sup> See, P. Adamson, *The Arabic Sea Battle: al-Fārābī on the Problem of Future Contingents*, "Archiv Für Geschichte Der Philosophie" 88, 2006, pp. 163-188. And by the same author, *Freedom and Determinism*, in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, ed. R. Pasnau, vol. 1, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2010, pp. 399-413. In his interpretation of *De Int.* 9, al-Fārābī vehemently rejects causal determinism and posits free will as self-evident principle, see F.W. Zimmermann, ed. *Al-Fārābī's Commentary and Short Treatise on Aristotle's De Interpretatione*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1981, pp. 83-84.

<sup>138</sup> See, K. Blankinship, *The Early Creed*, in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, ed. T. Winter, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2008, pp. 33-54. F.W. Zimmermann believes that the target of al-Fārābī's criticism could be Jahm Ibn Šafwān, see Zimmermann, *Al-Fārābī on Aristotle's De Interpretatione* cit., pp. cxiii-cxviii. On the political and ideological implications of these views see also, P. Crone, *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1986.

<sup>139</sup> For a helpful overview of the debate between Stoic and Epicurean views on determinism see, R.W. Sharples, *Alexander of Aphrodisias: On Fate*, Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., London 1983, pp. 3-29. For an analysis of Epicurus' position see, T. O'Keefe, *Epicurus on Freedom*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2005. For Aristotle's position on the same topic see R. Sorabji, *Necessity, Cause and Blame: Perspectives on Aristotle's Theory*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1980, pp. 227-272.

<sup>140</sup> In the *Ārā' ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, al-Fārābī classifies Epicurean views on Atomism among the opinions of the misguided cities; these views are mixed with references to Heraclitian flux theory and standard Skeptical arguments. See, Fārābī, *Perfect State* cit., 287-329, 481-503. As Walzer suggests, al-Fārābī seems to also have another target in mind: Theological Occasionalism. On the sources of Atomism in *Kalām*, see S. Pines, *Studies in Islamic Atomism*, ed. T. Langermann, trans. M. Schwarz, Magnes Press Hebrew University, Jerusalem 1997, pp. 1-40, 108-117. On the differences between Epicurian and *Kalām* Atomism see, A. Dahnani, *The Physical Theory of Kalām: Atoms, Space and Void in Basrian Mu'tazilī Cosmology*, E.J. Brill, Leiden 1994, pp. 90-123, 182-195. See also, R. Sorabji, *Time, Creation and the Continuum: Theories in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1983, pp. 384-402. On the importance of the political dimension of the Islamic debate on determinism and free will see, R. Chiaradonna, M. Rashed, *Before and After the Commentators: An Exercise in Periodization*, Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy, 38, 2010, pp. 251-297.

ordained theological determinism, aside from threatening human free will, automatically justifies the *de facto* power of serving dynasties and rulers. To put it simply, all existing political institutions are legitimate because their occurrence is necessarily the direct result of God's command and decree. Epicurean atomists, on the other hand, uphold a diametrically opposed view. Since in their eyes providence does not obtain, it is impossible to justify the existence of any particular political system on the assumption that there is a carefully arranged and beneficial cosmic structure.

Al-Fārābī proposes a middle way between these two extreme stances. His general solution affirms the important role played by human volition and rational deliberation (*irāda wa-ikhtiyār*) within the context of a coherent and providentially ordered universe. Hence, contrary to the Epicurean atomists, al-Fārābī believes that cosmic justice provides mankind with a distribution of all the necessary moral, deliberative and intellectual dispositions required to achieve human flourishing (*sa'āda*) and to establish a virtuous polity. However, unlike the theological determinists, he does not think that divine agency is concerned with the actualization of particular events or with the moulding of political groups and societies in a specific fashion. Instead, the attainment of happiness (*sa'āda*) and the construction of a virtuous city is a task that can only be carried out by the proper use of our innate free will and rational deliberation (*irāda wa-ikhtiyār*)<sup>141</sup>.

### 3.1-Divine Providence, Friendship and other Human Dispositions:

This impression is confirmed in al-Fārābī's *Falsafat Aristūṭālīs*, when he claims that human beings are not given their final end or perfection (*kamāl*) from the start. In fact, members of the species must use their

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<sup>141</sup> Human will and rational deliberation are guided, in the best cases, by what al-Fārābī calls '*ilm al-madanī*'. On the ethical and metaphysical dimension of the '*ilm al-madanī*' see, D. Gutas, *The Meaning of Madanī in al-Fārābī's "Political" Philosophy*, "Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph", 57, 2004, pp. 259-282.

prohairesis faculties (*irāda wa ikhtiyār*) to strive towards this ultimate goal<sup>142</sup>. Of course, in his description of Aristotle's philosophy, al-Fārābī suggests, quite correctly, that nature (*phusis*, *al-ṭabīʿa*) contributes partially to this process by insuring that human beings possess a number of innate dispositions that promote their survival. Interestingly, however in his programmatic as well as his chief political works al-Fārābī tends to distance himself from strict Aristotelian orthodoxy and complements the reference to nature with an appeal to the idea of providence and divine agency. This approach is conspicuous in the *Kitāb al-Milla*, where al-Fārābī knowingly mixes both naturalistic and providential phraseology when he talks of a God-given or divinely ordained set of natural dispositions (*hay'āt ṭabī'īya*). Thus, after affirming that the universe is created as a coherent and structured whole, al-Fārābī remarks that this order emerges partly thanks to the natural capacities or dispositions (*hay'āt ṭabī'īya*) that are found in each one of its components. Crucially, however the presence of these 'natural' dispositions depends on the beneficial work of divine influence:

[A]-“The Governor of the world places natural dispositions (*hay'āt ṭabī'īya*) in each part of the universe by which they are united (*'i'talafat*), ordered (*'intaḍamat*), connected (*'irtabaṭat*), and mutually supportive in actions in such a way that, despite their multiplicity and the multiplicity of their actions, they become like a single thing performing a single action for a single purpose.”<sup>143</sup>

The same idea is introduced in the *Ārā' ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila* but the argument there is slightly more detailed. Al-Fārābī explicitly adds that the presence of these dispositions (*hay'āt, aḥwāl*) is related to the First Being's substance. He reasserts that all the components of the universe are connected and ranked through their essences and their dispositions (*hay'āt, aḥwāl*). However, this time al-Fārābī is a bit more explicit in his description

<sup>142</sup> Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Falsafat Aristūṭālīs*, ed. M. Mahdi, Dār Majallat Shi'r, Beirut 1961, pp. 24-26.

<sup>143</sup> Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Milla*, ed. M. Mahdi, Dār al Mashreq, Beirut 2001, pp.64-65. Translation modified, see, C. E. Butterworth, *Alfarabi: The Political Writings*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 2001, pp. 112-113.

of these *hay'āt* or '*aḥwāl* and gives as an example the inherent capacity for friendship (*maḥabba*) displayed by human beings. To explain how this feature comes to characterize mankind al-Fārābī resorts to the same strategy we have explored in our opening chapter (1.4-[K]). In other words, he links this sociable attribute to cosmic justice. As we have already seen a number of features favourable to the persistence of sublunary life are connected to the divine substance (and more specifically to the property of '*adl*'). In the following passage, al-Fārābī further extends this idea by applying it to another beneficial sublunary quality; *maḥabba*:

[B]-“Other [beings are connected and united] by dispositions ('*aḥwāl*) which accompany their essences, such as friendship (*maḥabba*) by which human beings are connected, for friendship is one of their disposition (*ḥāl*) not the essence to which they owe their being. (2) These dispositions of theirs are also derived from the First Being, because its substance is such that many existents receive from it together with their substances the dispositions ('*aḥwāl*) by which they are connected (*yartabiṭu*) with each other and united (*ya'talifu*) and ordered (*yuntaḍimu*).”<sup>144</sup>

What is striking about excerpt [B] is that al-Fārābī continues to weave together naturalistic and providential explanations. This is a particularly interesting move, since it allows him to interpret the Aristotelian dictum that man is naturally a political or civil animal (*zoon politikon*, *ḥayawān madanī bi-ṭab'*) in a different perspective. Instead of understanding the social dimension of human existence solely in terms of a natural gregarious impulse, al-Fārābī suggests that this beneficial attribute (*maḥabba*) can further be explained metaphysically as the result of divine agency. Thus, when he describes the occurrence of this particular feature a few chapters later he carefully says that mankind is providentially endowed (*maftūrun*) with a social inclination<sup>145</sup>.

<sup>144</sup> Fārābī, *Perfect State cit.*, pp. 96-97.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., pp. 228-229.



I shall briefly return to al-Fārābī's deliberate use of the Quranic notion of *fiṭra* in a moment, but for now I would like to see how he is helped in his reasoning by preserving the Aristotelian view that the city is a composite whole or a compound (*suntheton, jumla*). It is well known that in the *Politics*, Aristotle argues for the priority of the city over the family and the individual<sup>146</sup>. To make his case, Aristotle appeals to the standard kind of part-whole rationale that he employs in his biological work<sup>147</sup>. Hence, he claims that in the same way that the human body is naturally prior to the hands or the feet, so the city is naturally prior to the individual or the family. This is because the parts are naturally posterior to the whole, since the parts are for the sake of the whole and dependent on it. For instance, a severed hand cannot fulfil its function and in this case is called a "hand" only by homonymy. Similarly an isolated individual will not be able to fulfil his function by leading a good life, since such a life is only attainable in a city. The solitary person then becomes either less or more than human: a beast or a god.

As I have already intimated, al-Fārābī believes as well that the city is a composite whole (*jumla*). However, unlike Aristotle, al-Fārābī does not explain the part-whole relation by resorting exclusively to the teleological order of nature (*phusis*) but once again he supplements this point of view with the idea of providence. This is already evident in passages [A] and [B], where al-Fārābī explains that the part-whole structure is informed by the substance of the First Being. In section [A] al-Fārābī affirms that the First Being orders the various parts that compose the universe into a coherent whole by ascribing to them specific dispositions. And in [B] he confirms that

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<sup>146</sup> Arist., *Pol.* I, 2. This theme is picked up by al-Fārābī in his discussion of the various kinds of human political associations; see Fārābī, *Siyāsa al-Madaniya* cit., pp. 69-70.

<sup>147</sup> For an analysis of Aristotelian part-whole reasoning as applied to social and political reality see, M.R. Johnson, *Aristotle on Teleology*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2005, pp. 237-246

statement by asserting that in the case of human beings that particular disposition is friendship (*maḥabba*).

Al-Fārābī complements his reworking of Aristotle's political naturalism when discussing the noetic role of the active intellect ('*aql al-fa'āl*). The tenth and last intellect to emanate from the First, the '*aql al-fa'āl*' famously endows the human species with common first intelligibles (*ma'qūlāt 'ūwla*) and in the *Siyāsa al-Madaniyya* this role is particularly described as a form of benevolent care ('*ināya*')<sup>148</sup>. Just as importantly for our purposes, certain of these first intelligibles supply human beings with moral and ethical principles. These principles are used as the starting point of our goal oriented deliberations and their actualization transforms our desiderative states. Rather, than being informed by mere animalistic impulses carried through sense-perception, our pro-attitudes become, as an effect of the active intellect, more rational and reflective. At this point according to al-Fārābī, one can no longer speak of a simple desiring will (*irāda*) when describing the human volitional faculty, but rather of a deliberative or prohairetic capacity (*irāda wa ikhtiyār*)<sup>149</sup>.

As we can see, al-Fārābī is able to capture and recast part of Aristotle's project in providential terms. For instance, he can easily explain the presence of ethical and political capacities in the human species by appealing to divine justice; which seems to guide and support the hand of nature (*phusis*, *al-ṭabī'ā*). In this way, al-Fārābī is able to integrate his idea of a just cosmic order with his account of human free will and deliberation.

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<sup>148</sup> This is by far one of the most studied elements of al-Fārābī's thought. For a general analysis of the topic see, H. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna and Averroes on Intellect: Their Cosmologies, Theory of the Active Intellect and Theories of Human Intellect*, Oxford University Press, Oxford – New York 1992, pp. 44-73. For the influence of Alexander on al-Fārābī see, M. Geoffroy, *La Tradition Arabe du Peri Nou d'Alexandre d'Aphrodise et les Origines de la Théorie Farabienne des Quatres Degrés de l'Intellect*, in *Aristotele e Alessandro di Afrodizia nella Tradizione Araba*, ed. C. D'Ancona, G. Serra, Il Poligrafo, Padova 2002, pp. 191-231. For the reference to '*ināya*' see, Fārābī, *Siyāsa al-Madaniya* cit., pp. 32-33.

<sup>149</sup> Fārābī, *Perfect State* cit., pp. 202-205. Fārābī, *Siyāsa al-Madaniya* cit., pp. 71-72.

Indeed, the existence of a prohairesic faculty (*irāda wa ikhtiyār*) and the occurrence of a sociable or friendly impulse (*maḥabba*) in human beings depends on, and confirms the beneficial structure of the universe.

### 3.2- A Hierarchy of Moral, Deliberative and Intellectual Dispositions:

In the little studied *Tanbīh ‘alā Sabīl al-Sa’āda*, and in the more famous *Taḥṣīl al-Sa’āda* al-Fārābī continues to adapt Aristotle’s ethical arguments to serve his philosophical agenda. In these texts, he suggests that human beings are endowed with the required aretaic dispositions to flourish ethically and to be able to construct and live in a virtuous city. First of all, it is important to note that al-Fārābī adopts the Aristotelian classification of virtue into ethical, practical and intellectual categories. Moreover, he also largely accepts the peripatetic account of *arete* (*faḍīla*) as an acquired state developed through gradual habituation. Finally, al-Fārābī insists as well on the fact that the process of habituation results from the exercise of one’s free will.

This comes out clearly in the opening of the *Tanbīh ‘alā Sabīl al-Sa’āda*, where al-Fārābī differentiates between two kinds of capacities in the human soul: the voluntary capacities which lead to the possession of states of character that are liable to praise or blame and the natural dispositions which do not<sup>150</sup>. Al-Fārābī’s reasoning here is evidently dependent on Aristotle’s remarks in the *Nicomachean Ethics* on the nutritive part of the soul<sup>151</sup>. According to Aristotle a study of human virtue will incorporate a consideration of the human soul. However, not all parts of the soul contribute equally to human agency. For instance, the soul’s nutritive part fulfils

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<sup>150</sup> Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Kitāb Tanbīh ‘alā Sabīl al-Sa’āda*, ed. J. Yassir, Dār al-Manāhil, Beirut 1992, pp. 229-230. Translated in , J. McGinnis, D. Reisman, *Classical Arabic Philosophy: An Anthology of Sources*, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis 2007, pp. 104-105.

<sup>151</sup> Arist., *NE*, I, 13. For the Arabic version see, Dunlop, *Arabic Nicomachean Ethics* cit., pp. 146-150.

vegetative functions which play a small role in our ethical lives. More particularly, the performance of these nutritive functions should not be taken into consideration when we wish to evaluate an agent's moral responsibility or worth. Indeed, no one is praised or blamed for breathing appropriately, digesting well or sleeping soundly. Instead, praise or blame, merit and demerit are associated with the parts of soul which deals with acting, desiring and thinking. Al-Fārābī takes this distinction for granted when he lists these different dispositions in passage [C] as belonging to the voluntary part of the soul.

[C]-“Every person, from the moment he exists, is innately endowed (*maḥḥūrun*) with a capacity (*quwwa*) through which his actions, the accidents of his soul, and his discernment are the way they should be, and it is through the very same potentiality that these three are not the way they should be.”<sup>152</sup>

When speaking in excerpt [C] of the soul's voluntary capacity which deals with actions, the accidents of the soul and discernment, al-Fārābī is of course referring, in a rather belaboured fashion, to our moral, deliberative and intellectual powers. In other words, he is simply suggesting that human beings are providentially endowed (*maḥḥūrun*) with these dispositions and can use them voluntarily to pursue virtuous or vicious ends. In the first case, these capacities are “the way they should be” and in the second “they are not the way they should be” to use al-Fārābī's desperately contorted words. By once again alluding to the notion of *fiṭra* or God-given primordial nature al-Fārābī knowingly exploits religious terminology to advance his position that human capacities are dependent on divine providence<sup>153</sup>.

Aside from the use of Quranic and theological vocabulary, much of what al-Fārābī says is familiar. For instance, like Aristotle he believes that human beings are not uniformly equipped with the same virtuous

<sup>152</sup> Fārābī, *Tanbih* cit., pp. 232-233. Translation slightly modified see, Reisman, *Classical Arabic Philosophy Anthology*, cit., pp.106-107.

<sup>153</sup> See, “*fiṭra*” *El2*, II, 932, (D. B. MacDonald). L. Gardet, G. Anawati, *Introduction à la Théologie Musulmane*, J. Vrin, Paris 1944, pp. 349-350.

dispositions. In fact, certain persons are more inclined to acquire and develop particular moral traits rather than others<sup>154</sup>. This is more easily noticed, al-Fārābī argues, in irrational animals. A number of species are inherently prone to display specific traits of character: such as courage in lions or cunning in foxes. Of course, in irrational animals these behaviours are not related to the moral virtues at all, since their performance does not involve a deliberate and voluntary process of acquisition. Nevertheless, al-Fārābī uses a series of zoological examples to bring out the point that certain persons appear to be innately better equipped to acquire certain virtues. For instance, someone who is inherently prone to stand his ground against an enemy will more easily acquire the virtue of courage, according to al-Fārābī, than someone whose first reaction is to flee in the face of danger<sup>155</sup>.

Al-Fārābī quickly generalizes this observation on moral traits to intellectual and deliberative virtues. His argument is rather simple and proceeds essentially by analogy. He claims that if moral dispositions vary in excellence then this must also be the case for deliberative and intellectual dispositions, since they all belong to the same voluntary part of the soul. Hence some people will more easily become discerning, generous or clever, while others, will have more facility in being courageous, quick-witted, or just. In other words, al-Fārābī assumes that a diverse assortment of virtuous dispositions is unevenly distributed across the human species. This conclusion seems rather innocuous and uncontroversial. At this point however, al-Fārābī's line of thought takes an interesting turn. On the basis of the arguments elicited above, al-Fārābī suggests that there is in fact a

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<sup>154</sup> Here al-Fārābī is obviously inspired by Aristotle's treatment of the problem of the voluntary in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. See, Arist., *NE.*, III, 5. For the Arabic version see, Dunlop, *Arabic Nicomachean Ethics* cit., pp. 204-212. For an overview of this problem see, S. Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1991, pp. 124-178.

<sup>155</sup> Fārābī, *Taḥṣīl al-Sa'āda* cit., pp. 164-165. For a different interpretation of this passage see, C. Colmo, *Breaking with Athens: Alfarabi as founder*. Lexington Books, Lanham 2005, pp. 17-24.

natural dispositional ranking of intellectual, moral and practical virtues in the human species. In other words, starting from the Aristotelian idea of a diversity of virtuous dispositions, al-Fārābī tries to ascertain the thesis that there exists a latent or potential hierarchical ordering (*tartīb*) of these qualities in the species at large. This claim comes up in the following passage from the *Tahṣīl al-Sa'āda* :

[D]–“(a) If this is the case, not every chance person (*insān itafaqa*) shall possess [practical] arts, ethical virtues and intellectual virtues of great potentiality. (b) As a result, the king is not a king simply by will (*irāda*) but also by nature (*ṭabī'ā*). Similarly, the subservient [citizen] occupies a serving (*khādimun*) position primarily by nature and secondarily by will. In this way, the [servant's] natural dispositions are perfected. (c) If this is the case, then theoretical virtue, as well as the highest deliberative, and moral virtues, along with the practical art are found in [persons] that have been readied for it by nature (*'u'idda lahā bi-ṭab'ī*). (d) These are the [persons] who are said to possess superior natures with the most exceptional potential (*quwwa*).”<sup>156</sup>

Al-Fārābī's argument in excerpt [D] covers a lot of theoretical ground and as a result it rewards close scrutiny. Starting from the assumption at D-(a) that there is a hierarchical distribution of innate virtuous dispositions, al-Fārābī infers that the highest political office in the city will have to be occupied by the most gifted person. At D-(c) he supplements this claim by affirming that this individual's ethical, intellectual and deliberative dispositions are naturally ordained or prepared (*'u'idda lahā bi-ṭab'ī*). By combining these two propositions, al-Fārābī is in fact giving an answer to the all-important question: who should govern?

According to al-Fārābī, the legitimacy of the ruler ought to be based on the excellence of his innate virtues. In giving this answer, he explicitly rejects two alternative solutions: the belief that the power of the ruler derives from simple chance (*ittifāq*) or that it is rooted only in convention or will (*irāda*). The critical remark against the importance of chance or randomness

<sup>156</sup> Fārābī, *Tahṣīl al-Sa'āda* cit., pp. 165. Translation significantly modified see, Mahdi, *Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle* cit., pp. 33-34.

is most probably a jibe directed towards Epicurean atomism. Importantly, al-Fārābī extends his analysis from the subject of political legitimacy to that of political obligations by resorting to the same kind of reasoning. Once again, a person's inborn virtuous dispositions are believed to prepare her or him for a specific political function. Thus, at D-(b), al-Fārābī explains that a set of individuals will have inherently limited talents and abilities; these people should as a result fulfil subservient roles in the city<sup>157</sup>.

Interestingly, al-Fārābī carefully avoids the use of language that might lead to a muddling of his position with deterministic arguments. Thus, he does not claim that the less gifted citizens will always and necessarily occupy a serving position by deferring to the more virtuous inhabitants of the city. Similarly, he insists, when discussing the qualities of the possible rulers or kings that he is speaking of potential dispositions (*quwwa*) and not of actual virtues. In other words, al-Fārābī is not asserting that these remarkably gifted individuals will in all cases actualize and develop their virtuous potential. A fortiori, neither is he claiming that divine providence will necessarily ensure that these persons will obtain positions of power and prestige if they actualize their dispositions. In fact, on numerous occasions, al-Fārābī underlines the hostile or at best unreceptive socio-political context encountered by exceptionally virtuous persons<sup>158</sup>.

It is obvious then, that in devising his arguments al-Fārābī wishes to avoid getting caught on either horn of the dilemma surrounding providence. Hence, to escape from the Epicurean denial of cosmic order, he claims that the human species is endowed (*maftūṛ/fitra*) with the necessary disposition

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<sup>157</sup> This line of thought, with its endorsement of the subordination of innately inferior individuals to intrinsically superior ones, is in many ways reminiscent of Aristotle's view on natural slavery. See, Arist., *Pol.* I, 2-5. See, M. Levin, *Aristotle on Natural Subordination*, "Philosophy", 72, 1997, pp. 241-257.

<sup>158</sup> Fārābī, *Taḥṣīl al-Sa'āda* cit., pp. 195-196, Fārābī, *Fuṣūl* cit., pp. 94-95, Fārābī, *Aflātūn* cit., pp. 22-23. This sensitivity to the difficult predicament of would-be philosopher-kings expands on a familiar Platonic theme; see Rep. VI-VII. In fact, in his *Falsafat Aflātūn*, al-Fārābī goes as far as saying that the perfect human being (*al-insān al-kāmmil*) is in grave danger when he finds himself stranded amidst a crowd of inferior citizens.

to flourish and construct a virtuous city. On the other hand, to evade the view of theological determinists, al-Fārābī allows for the existence of ideal, non-ideal and even vicious states of affairs by making the actualization or non-actualization of virtuous dispositions dependent on the exercise of one's prohairesis faculties (*irāda wa ikhtiyār*).

### 3.3- Dispositions, Hierarchy and Justice in the Virtuous City:

The idea that there is an uneven distribution of virtues across the human species has also a significant impact on al-Fārābī's understanding of justice (*ʿadl*) in the ideal city. It notably leads him to assume that the institutional composition of the *madīna fāḍila* will take the form of a meticulously organized hierarchy. We've touched on this topic in the preceding chapter and seen how al-Fārābī uses an analogy with the body to signal the type of stratification that exists in the perfect polity. Although al-Fārābī makes numerous direct references to the nature of this ranking (*tartīb*), he is rarely as explicit and detailed as in the following passage from the *Fuṣūl Muntazaʿa*:

E-“The virtuous city is composed of five parts: the virtuous, the belles-lettrists, the assessors, the warriors, the merchants. The virtuous are the wise and prudent and those who have opinions on the foremost questions. Following them are the transmitters of the creed and the belles-lettrists, they are: the rhetoricians, the eloquent, the poets, the musicians, the scribes and those who accomplish similar tasks. The assessors are the accountants, the engineers, the doctors, the astronomers, and those who accomplish similar tasks. The merchants are those who earn money in the city, like the farmers, herders, sellers and those who accomplish similar tasks.”<sup>159</sup>

Admittedly, there are echoes here of the constitution of Plato's *Kallipolis*, obvious in the distinction al-Fārābī makes between the classes of citizens constituted by the wise, the soldiers and the merchants. However, more

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<sup>159</sup> Fārābī, *Fuṣūl* cit., pp. 65-66.



importantly for our purposes, there are also very clear hints of Aristotle's famous discussion of teleology in the opening book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

There Aristotle, starting from the view that all activities and inquiries are for the sake of something, is led to differentiate between the various types of ends that are pursued<sup>160</sup>. Some appear to be subordinate and others seem to be super-ordinate or ultimate ends. Aristotle then offers an analysis of the various crafts and sciences based on this distinction<sup>161</sup>. He illustrates his argument with the example of bridle making, an example that al-Fārābī also employs. Thus, Aristotle says that the craft of the bridle maker is subordinate to that of the horseman. This is because the horseman is the end-user of the bridle. Presumably, the function of the bridle is to allow for good horse riding and only the horseman can reckon whether this function is properly accomplished or not. Aristotle continues in the same vein by saying that the craft of horse riding, in times of war, is subordinate to the art of the general, which assigns it its end; namely, victory in battle. At this point, a pattern emerges: Aristotle appears to be arguing for the subordination of activities that provide means (a bridle or a cavalryman) to those that control the ultimate ends (horse riding or military strategy).

In a striking move al-Fārābī uses this Aristotelian distinction to help him describe the hierarchical order of the ideal city. This is made explicit in the following passage:

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<sup>160</sup> Arist., *NE*, I, 1. Dunlop, *Arabic Nicomachean Ethics* cit., pp. 112-113.

<sup>161</sup> This topic has been the subject of a central controversy among Aristotelian scholars and constitutes one of the focal points in the dispute that opposes "inclusivist" readings of Aristotle's notion of *eudaimonia* to "intellectualist" interpretations. See, J.L Ackrill, *Aristotle on Eudaimonia*, in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics* ed. A. O. Rorty, University of California Press, Berkeley 1980, pp. 15-34. J. M. Cooper, *Reason and Human Good in Aristotle*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1975, pp. 144-180. R. Kraut, *Aristotle on the Human Good*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1989, pp. 197-266. G. Richardson-Lear, *Happy lives and the Highest Good: An Essay on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2004, pp. 8-46.

F-“The ranks (*marātib*) of the virtuous city are stratified in the [following] manner: In certain cases, when a person performs a given action to achieve a specific end and in pursuing this end this [person] uses an object-which had been the goal of another person’s action- then the first [person] is the ruler and has priority in rank over the second. And this is the case of horsemanship; the purpose of this [craft] is the perfect use of weaponry. The horseman who uses the reins and the instruments that are the aim of the art of making bridles is the ruler and he has priority over the bridle maker, and over the horse trainer, and this is the case in all activities and crafts”<sup>162</sup>

Al-Fārābī’s argument in excerpt [F] is evidently quite similar to that of Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, but it is not identical. In fact, al-Fārābī deploys his reasoning in a slightly different direction. He uses Aristotle’s teleological analysis to forge a link between the subordination of activities and the subordination of persons. As such, the purpose of al-Fārābī’s argument is to connect the ability of certain citizens to achieve specific ends or functions to their political status or rank (*rutba*). In other words, a citizen who performs a higher activity which aims at an ultimate end (*ghāya quṣwā*) will have more authority in the virtuous city than the one who fulfils a mid- or low-level function. By higher end, al-Fārābī understands, in a very Aristotelian fashion, an end that is choice-worthy for itself (a favourite example of a *ghāya quṣwā* is happiness). Of course, mid and low level activities are not ends in themselves but are carried out for the sake of superior goals.

Importantly, for al-Fārābī the capacity to carry out higher or lower activities will be contingent on the agent’s inborn virtuous abilities. In other words, the more gifted agents are more adept and likely to pursue higher ends than the less able ones. For instance, someone who is endowed with outstanding intellectual and practical abilities is more likely to acquire wisdom and prudence. As a result this person is able to better discern and grasp the ultimate purpose of human life, i.e. happiness (*sa’āda*). Al-Fārābī’s

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<sup>162</sup> Fārābī, *Fuṣūl* cit., pp. 68-69.

five-fold stratification of the ideal city's inhabitants presupposes such a teleological arrangement.

Thus, when describing the leaders who occupy the city's preeminent echelons al-Fārābī says that they are wise and prudent and acquainted with the loftiest or foremost matters (*'umūr 'aẓīma*). They are followed by the transmitters of the creed; these are the rhetoricians, the poets and the eloquent. As its name indicates this group of citizens carries out a subordinate task, its function is to persuasively communicate and propagate the opinions that are endorsed by their enlightened or wise superiors. The next group is that of technical administrators; composed of accountants, engineers and physicians, this class is inferior to the ideologues since it presumably deals with more mundane and practical matters such as taxation, water distribution, public health, fortification and road building. For the same reason, the warrior, merchant and artisan class occupy the last three echelons in the polity. It appears then that the citizens are organized by suitably matching the teleological excellence of their social function, their political position and their virtuous capabilities.

As it turns out, this perfect correlation between merit (*isti'hāl*), civil function and institutional rank (*rutba*) corresponds to al-Fārābī's view of justice (*'adl*) in the ideal city. This implication is conveyed in a turn of phrase reminiscent of Aristotle's analysis of distributive justice in book five of the *Nicomachean Ethics*<sup>163</sup>:

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<sup>163</sup> See, Arist., *NE.*, V, 1131 a-b. "Regarding the class of partial justice [...] it is concerned with the distribution of honour or wealth, or any other [good] which is divided amongst the members of the city. For in these things there are equal and unequal [shares] for different persons. There is also another kind [of justice] which corrects human transactions. And these can be of two types: some incorrect [transactions] are voluntary and others are involuntary. For instance, the voluntary are like selling, lending, pledging, loaning, depositing and letting, and these are said to be voluntary because the starting point of the transaction is voluntary. As to the involuntary ones, some of them are secretive, like theft, adultery, witchcraft, procuring, enticing of slaves, assassination and false witness and some involve force, like assault, imprisonment, murder, robbery, oppression, insult and slander." By involuntary, Aristotle is referring to transactions done against one's will or under duress, he is obviously describing the action from the perspective of the unwilling victim rather than that

G-“Justice (*‘adl*) concerns first of all the distribution of the common goods amongst all the inhabitants of the city. Then, [justice] preserves this distribution. The common goods are safety, wealth, honour, ranks (*marātib*) and all the other goods that can be shared amongst the inhabitants. To each one of the inhabitants of the city correspond a share (*qusṭa*) of these goods equivalent to their merit (*isti’hāl*). It is unjust that one receives less or more [than one’s share]. If one receives less, it is an injustice to oneself. If one receives more it is an injustice done to the other inhabitants of the city. When each member [of the city] has received its proper share (*qusṭa*) of [the common goods], this share must be preserved for all of them.”<sup>164</sup>

Just like Aristotle, al-Fārābī recognizes that justice consists in the fair allocation of common goods and benefits amongst the citizenry. Moreover, they both agree that the share (*qusṭa*) allotted to each person will have to be commensurate with their merit (*isti’hāl*). Where al-Fārābī and Aristotle differ is in the specific institutional context surrounding this procedure. The ‘Second Teacher’ insists -and here his Platonism comes to the fore- that the just distribution of goods and offices is the sole prerogative of an all-powerful and virtuous philosopher-king or ideal prince. Aristotle on the other hand does not associate distributive justice with one particular form of government; indeed, in *The Politics* he considers how various kinds of regimes (democratic, aristocratic, monarchical and mixed) can carry out a fair distribution of goods and benefits<sup>165</sup>. Al-Fārābī’s more exclusive viewpoint, which is consonant with arguments we have explored in the

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of the active perpetrator. Translation modified see, Dunlop, *Arabic Nicomachean Ethics* cit., pp. 300-03. On this topic see, D. Keyt, *Distributive Justice in Aristotle’s Ethics and Politics*, “*Topoi: An International Review of Philosophy*”, 4, 1985, pp. 23-45. A revised version of this article appears under the title “Aristotle’s Theory of Distributive Justice” in *A Companion to Aristotle’s Politics*, eds. D. Keyt, F. Miller, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford 1991, pp. 238-78. See also, T. H. Irwin, *Aristotle’s First Principles*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1988, pp. 424-438.

<sup>164</sup> Fārābī, *Fuṣūl* cit., pp. 71-72.

<sup>165</sup> Arist., *Pol.* III-6-7, III-10, 1281 a 10-35, III-12, 1282 b 15–25, III-18, 1287 b 30-35, IV-11. Some of these remarks (notably *Pol.*, III, 1282 b 15-25) are reminiscent of Aristotle’s claim in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that all regimes believe in distributive justice: “This is also clear from [what accords with] merit (*isti’hāl*), for all agree that justice is in the [distribution] of worthy things, but they do not say that merit (*isti’hāl*) is the same. The supporters of democracy say that it is freedom, while the supporters of oligarchy say that it is wealth, others say that it is noble lineage.” See, Arist., *NE.*, V, 1131 a-b. Translation modified see, Dunlop, *Arabic Nicomachean Ethics* cit., pp. 300-03.

preceding chapter (2.4-[E]), comes up with particular force in a revealing section of the *Siyāsa al-Madaniyya* where he describes the preeminent role played by the first ruler (*al-raʾīs al-ʾawwal*) in the ranking (*tartīb*) of his subjects:

H-“(a) The ranking (*marātib*) of the members of the city, when it comes to ruling (*riʾāsa*) and serving (*khidma*), are stratified in excellence according to their inherent dispositions (*fiṭra*) and according to the habits of character they have formed. The first ruler (*raʾīs al-ʾawwal*) is the one who ranks each section and every individual in each section, in the place they merit (*istiʿhāl*), by ascribing to each one a ruling or serving position. Therefore there will be certain ranks that are close to the [first ruler], others slightly further away, and still others that are far away from him. These are the ruling ranks of [the city] (*marātib al-riʾāsāt*), starting from the highest ruling position, one descends gradually until one reaches the serving ranks (*marātib al-khidma*), devoid of any element of ruling and below which there is no other rank. (b) Therefore, after having ordered these ranks (*marātib*), if the first ruler wishes to issue a command concerning a certain matter that he desires the members of the city or one of their sections to perform, [...], he will communicate his wish to the ranks closest to him, these will hand it on to their subordinates, and so forth until it reaches down to the rank (*rutba*) assigned to execute (*khidma*) that specific matter. As a result, the parts of the city will be connected (*murtabiṭa*) to each other and united (*muʿtalifa*) together and hierarchized (*murataba*) by giving precedence to some [parts] over others [parts]. (c) Thus the [structure] of the city becomes analogous to the [order] of natural beings, its ranking is similar to the ranking of the existents (*al-mawjudāt*) which originate from the First [being] and terminate in prime matter and the elements; and the way the [parts of the city] are connected (*murtabiṭa*) and united (*muʿtalifa*) to each other will be similar to the way the existents are connected (*murtabiṭa*) and united (*muʿtalifa*) together. The founder (*mudabir*) of such a city will be like the First cause which is the cause of the existence of all the other beings. The ranks of existents decline gradually, each [rank] fulfilling a ruling and serving [role], until one reaches the lowest possible existents which have no ruling qualities but can only serve (*khādima*) and exist for the sake of others that is, prime matter and the elements.”<sup>166</sup>

In this pivotal passage, al-Fārābī nicely brings together a number of central features of his conception of cosmic and political justice. In the first place, he begins by explaining how the virtuous sovereign arranges the various ranks (*rutba*) of the ideal city by judiciously calibrating each position and office to the virtuous disposition (*fiṭra*) and merit (*istiʿhāl*) of its occupant. As in Plato’s

<sup>166</sup> Fārābī, *Siyāsa al-Madaniyya* cit., pp. 83-84.

*Republic*, the perfect ruler is supposed to meticulously evaluate the abilities of all the individuals before assigning them a function consonant with their skill. And since, as we just saw, human beings are endowed with unequal dispositions the best citizens will be entrusted with leading roles and the less gifted will be assigned more subservient tasks. A direct outcome of this process is the establishment of a strictly hierarchical and centralized chain of command throughout the entire polity. The orders issued by the perfect king will be conveyed to his closest and most worthy deputies who will communicate his wishes to suitable auxiliaries. If need be these persons might pass on the necessary commands to lower ranked attendants and so on until the appropriate actions are taken and the required results obtained. In this way, a beneficial and effective ranking will permeate the multiple layers of the city's institutions. The subordinate and superordinate arts, crafts and sciences and the persons that pursue them will be so perfectly coordinated and ordered that even at a distance from the first ruler, the exercise of his diffused authority will still be called the work of wisdom and justice.

In the second place, al-Fārābī indicates that this hierarchical structure (*tartīb*) mirrors exactly the graded emanative organization of the universe (*nizām*). To underline this resemblance, al-Fārābī characteristically employs similar language when describing these two arrangements. Thus, each inhabitant in the city is said to have a certain virtuous merit (*isti'hāl*) to which corresponds a proper share (*quṣṭa*) of goods and a clear rank (*rutba*). In the same way, each being emanating from the First has an allotted share (*quṣṭa*) of existence (*wujūd*) which reflects its ontological worth (*isti'hāl*) and its rank (*rutba*) in the world. Finally, al-Fārābī rounds off his depiction by comparing the role played by the city's founding father (*mudabir*) to the function of the First Being.

In his sober and almost peremptory presentation of this analogy, al-Fārābī coarsens the subtleties of his vision, but this deliberate economy of

detail is meant to serve a greater purpose. I think that al-Fārābī wants us to realize that the agreement between the cosmic and political structures is in part rendered possible by the providential allocation of dispositional virtues (*fiṭra/aḥwāl*) in the human species at large. In other words, it is only because there are persons potentially equipped with higher, lower and mid-level abilities that there are clearly differentiated serving and ruling parts (*marātib al-khidma/ marātib al-ri'āsa*) in the city. In this sense, the dispositional gradation of intellectual, practical and moral virtues enables the differentiations between the various specialized groups that compose the virtuous polity such as the belle-lettrists, the assessors, the warriors and the merchants; and this renders the collective pursuit of human excellence possible. It is important to notice, however, that the existence of these diverse virtues and dispositions is not to be confused with their proper actualization or correct ranking.

As we have just seen, the attainment of communal flourishing depends on the deliberate and voluntary actions of a set of free agents led by an exceptionally gifted ruler. If these agents are rightly guided and ranked then they will correctly exercise their inborn capacities and in the process acquire the corresponding virtues and achieve their ultimate ends. The opposite is, of course, true. In other words, human beings can easily use the same innate prohairetic faculties and dispositions in a completely different direction and pursue vice rather than virtue, domination and pleasure instead of justice and wisdom.

### 3.4- The Denial of Providence and the Diseased Opinions of Ignorant Cities:

In fact, according to al-Fārābī all the unjust or ignorant cities strive towards false conceptions of happiness and operate with a misconstrued understanding of justice. As a result, their political institutions tend to

promote erroneous values and breed vicious habits in the citizenry. This is evident in the way the majority of their inhabitants conceive of merit (*isti'hāl*). For instance, many of them will estimate an individual's worth in accordance with the quantity of pleasure, wealth, and power this person will have been able to accumulate without any regard for his or her virtuous disposition and development.

J-“In the eyes of the members of the ignorant cities, merits (*istihāl*) are not based on virtue but on wealth, or on possessing the means of pleasure and play and on obtaining more [than one's share] of both or on obtaining more [than is] necessary for life, so that one is served and well provided for with all the necessities he needs. [...] There is another thing which is strongly desired by most of the members of the ignorant cities: domination. For whoever gains it becomes an object of envy. Therefore, [domination] as well must be regarded as one of the merits (*istihāl*) in the ignorant communities.”<sup>167</sup>

Interestingly, al-Fārābī suggests that these erroneous conceptions of happiness and justice might often be rooted in a denial of divine providence. In passage [M] al-Fārābī describes a series of atomistic and flux doctrines and connects them to the opinions held by the inhabitants of ignorant and perverted cities in excerpts [K] and [L].

K- “Some people maintained that friendship and attachment do not exist, neither by nature nor by a conscious act of will, that every human being ought to hate every other human being and that everybody ought to show dislike of everybody; that two people join forces only in case of necessity and do not unite except in case of need [...] If some outside event compels them to associate and unite, their cooperation will go on. But when that emergency has passed, they ought again to dislike each other and separate.”

L- “Justice is to defeat by force every possible group of men which happens to be in one's way; and the defeated either loses his physical integrity in his defeat and then dies and perishes, and the victor remains alone in existence, or he loses his position of honor in his defeat, and then will survive in an inferior status or be enslaved by the victorious group and will do what is most useful for the victor.”

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<sup>167</sup> Fārābī, *Siyāsa al-Madaniya* cit., pp. 90-91. Translation significantly modified see, F. Najjar, *The Political Regime*, in *Medieval Political Philosophy*, ed. M. Mahdi, R. Lerner, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1972, pp. 44-45.



M-“We see things occurring without order; we see that the established ranks of the existents are not kept, we see many single things connected closely with some being or non-being without deserving it. They said: This and the like of it is evident in the existents which we observe and come to know. [...] Therefore they held that cities ought to overpower and to fight each other, there being neither any ranks nor any established order, nor any place of honour or something else reserved for one and nobody else in particular according to merit (*istihāl*).”<sup>168</sup>

In other words, al-Fārābī argues that if our conception of the cosmos concentrates on its apparent chaotic nature and on the perceptible rule of chance in human events then we will reach a deviant conception of political justice. Starting from the apparent cosmic disorder, one will posit by analogy a view of human affairs that privileges the importance of power, survival and domination. By extension, this same belief will lead us to reject the existence of a providential gradation of human dispositions and virtues. As a result, a person’s political rank and function will not be made to correspond to his or her inborn nature and talents. Consequently, the entire edifice that sustains the foundation and justice of the ideal city will crumble. Indeed, if there are no inborn dispositions and virtues then there is no proper function or correct ranking within a polity.

Here, al-Fārābī clearly underlines the fact that our metaphysical presuppositions influence to a large extent our normative beliefs. He gives a further example of this when he says that someone who denies the existence of a providential cosmic order will also deny the existence of an inherent amicable impulse in the human species. In point of fact, al-Fārābī argues in excerpt [K], that from this false perspective the motivations behind our mutual interactions are likely to be glossed over as either expressions of self-interest or reactions to strong external constraints. Similarly, he continues in [L], political justice will in all likelihood be equated with the manifestation of brute force and domination.

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<sup>168</sup> For excerpts [K] [L] [M] see, Fārābī, *Perfect State* cit., pp. 291, 293, 299.

Al-Fārābī sketches a picture of human existence under these presumed chaotic cosmic conditions which resembles the nasty version of life encountered in a Hobbesian state of nature. This dark tableau serves the dual purpose of warning us against the consequences of faulty ideas about providence and of complementing al-Fārābī's analysis of Ignorant regimes. Indeed, al-Fārābī's description of this disorderly moral and cosmic universe is carried out to finalize his account of the various symptoms that ail unhealthy political communities. As we shall see in the next chapter, this investigation helps tie together the cosmic, bodily and political strands of his project. After establishing that certain views or beliefs are diseased<sup>169</sup>, al-Fārābī describes how a healthy or virtuous state of affairs can be brought about through the assiduous and expert care of a beneficial and therapeutic political craft.

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<sup>169</sup> Here it is important to keep in mind that the understanding of providence associated with Stoicism and theological determinism is also seen by al-Fārābī as a wicked and unhealthy doctrine. This point has already been discussed in our opening chapter; see section 1.5-[L].

## Chapter Four

### Medicine and the Practice of Virtuous Politics

The opening of al-Fārābī's *Fuṣūl Muntaza'a* announces his commitment to an analogy between the medical and political or civil craft (*mihna*, *ṣinā'a*) in dramatic terms. The drama begins with the title: the word "*Fuṣūl*" is surely intended to recall the *Fuṣūl Buqrāṭ*, the name Ḥunayn Ibn Isḥāq had given to his Arabic translation of Hippocrates' famous *Aphorisms*. Al-Fārābī's first move, in other words, is to associate his treatise in the minds of his readers with one of the most celebrated works in the history of medical thought and practice<sup>170</sup>. The importance of this decision is confirmed in the first series of aphorisms. After stating that the *Fuṣūl Muntaza'a* offers political and ethical recommendations gleaned from the ancients (*al-qudamā'*) to assist the founding of a virtuous city<sup>171</sup>, al-Fārābī explicitly compares the craft of the statesman to that of the physician. He suggests that the role of the statesman or king is to restore and preserve the moral health of the city in the same way that the physician restores and preserves the physical health of the body<sup>172</sup>.

In aphorisms thirty to thirty two of the *Fuṣūl Muntaza'a*, al-Fārābī hints at a fundamental clarification: While discussing the different types of political

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<sup>170</sup> For the use of "*Fuṣūl*" in the Arabic medical literature see, D.M. Dunlop, *Aphorisms of the Statesman*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1961, pp. 9-10, 27-28. For the nature of the medical curriculum in the Islamic context see, P.E. Pormann, E. Savage-Smith, *Medieval Islamic Medicine*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2007, pp. 80-85. Maimonides in his commentary on Hippocrates' *Aphorisms* famously mentions al-Fārābī's work as a model in his discussion of the literary genre of the "*Fuṣūl*". See, Maimonides, *Medical Aphorisms Treatise 1-5*, ed. trans. G. Bos, Brigham Young University Press, Provo 2007. To my knowledge there exists no critical edition of Ḥunayn Ibn Isḥāq's Arabic version of Hippocrates's *Aphorisms*. Although the Syriac version has been edited, see H. Pognon, *Une Version Syriaque des Aphorismes d'Hippocrate*, J.C. Hinrich, Leipzig 1903.

<sup>171</sup> Fārābī, *Fuṣūl* cit., pp. 22-23. "These are selected aphorisms (*fuṣūl muntaza'a*) which include many basic considerations from the sayings of the ancients on how cities must be ruled and rendered prosperous and the lives of their people reformed, and how they must be directed towards happiness". Translation slightly modified, see Dunlop, *Aphorisms* cit., pp. 26-27.

<sup>172</sup> Fārābī, *Fuṣūl* cit., pp. 24-25.

leadership, he suggests that the analogy between medicine and politics is valid primarily when used to describe the work performed by the ideal ruler or true king (*al-malik fī l-ḥaqīqa*). Part of the reason for this is that, according to al-Fārābī non-ideal sovereigns will usually exercise their power to pursue their personal benefits, such as wealth, pleasure or honour, rather than to foster their subjects' moral flourishing<sup>173</sup>. As such, the comparison with the medical craft would obviously be inappropriate: Simply because, in al-Fārābī's view a physician's actions are always directed towards the promotion of his patients' health and not towards the promotion of his self-interest<sup>174</sup>.

In this sense, the analogy between medicine and politics allows al-Fārābī to touch on the problem of political authority. He notes that the shortcomings of non-ideal rulers are such that the ancients (*al-qudamā'*) refused to call them kings at all. This remark points us towards an interesting argument on political legitimacy, which al-Fārābī uses on several occasions, notably in the concluding section of the *Taḥṣīl al-Sa'āda*<sup>175</sup>. In this segment, al-Fārābī argues that the legitimate exercise of political authority depends solely on the ruler's possession of a certain form of virtuous expertise and not on the presence of other extrinsic elements such as wealth, public support or even power. Predictably, al-Fārābī reinforces this claim by appealing to a medical analogy. Thus, he says that the ideal ruler is a

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<sup>173</sup> "A group of other [non-virtuous] rulers is of the opinion that it is all three of these [ends] brought together-namely, honours, wealth, and pleasures. They rule despotically and use the inhabitants of the city as things similar to tools for them to attain pleasures and wealth. Not one of these is called king by the ancients." Fārābī, *Fuṣūl* cit., pp. 24-25. Translation modified, see C. E. Butterworth, *Alfarabi: The Political Writings*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 2001, pp. 28-29.

<sup>174</sup> For al-Fārābī's definition of the medical craft see, Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Risāla fī al-Radd 'alā Jālīnūs* in *Traité Philosophiques: Al-Kindī, Al-Fārābī, Ibn Bajjah, Ibn 'Addy*, ed. A. Badawi, Publication de L'Université de Libye, Benghazi 1973, pp. 38-42. For an illuminating analysis of the classification of medicine in Arabic philosophy see, D. Gutas, *Medical Theory and Scientific Method in the Age of Avicenna*, in *Before and After Avicenna*, ed. D. Reisman, E.J. Brill, Leiden 2003, pp. 145-162.

<sup>175</sup> Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Kitāb Taḥṣīl al-Sa'āda*, ed. J. Yassir, Dār al-Manāhil, Beirut 1992, pp. 195-196. Translation slightly modified see, M. Mahdi, *Alfarabi: Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1969, pp. 48-49.

sovereign because of his mastery of the kingly craft in the same way that the authentic physician is a physician by his mastery of the medical craft<sup>176</sup>.

This idea, of course, has significant Platonic undertones and D. M. Dunlop correctly notes that the analogy between the craft (*techne*) of the ideal king and that of the excellent physician can be traced back to several sections of the *Statesman*<sup>177</sup>. It is unlikely that this dialogue was available to al-Fārābī in its entirety. Nevertheless, he seems to have been familiar with the main lines of its argument, which he correctly reports in his *Falsafat Aflāṭun*<sup>178</sup>. To explain this familiarity Dunlop speculates that al-Fārābī could have had access to the dialogue through an Arabic version of its Galenic synopsis<sup>179</sup>. Whatever the case may be, what is clear is that al-Fārābī is attracted to the Platonic view that there is an expert political knowledge and that the possession of this knowledge renders the exercise of power legitimate.

On the other hand, when it comes to his discussion of how this legitimate power is employed, al-Fārābī turns to Aristotle's treatment of prudence (*phronesis*, *ta'aqqul*) for inspiration. For instance, when he defines the various components of the ideal kingly craft in the *Kitāb al-Milla* and the *Iḥsā' al-'Ulūm*, al-Fārābī insists that the perfect ruler should apply his craft by relying on a specific faculty, a faculty which is acquired only via a prolonged period of wide ranging experience (*tajriba*) in political affairs. The philosophers of antiquity, al-Fārābī adds, call this faculty, prudence

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<sup>176</sup> See, excerpts [A] and [B].

<sup>177</sup> Dunlop, *Aphorisms* cit., pp. 17-20. For additional parallels with Platonic texts, notably in the *Statesman*, *Laws* and *Republic* see, J. Lameer, *The Philosopher and the Prophet: Greek Parallels to Al-Fārābī's Theories of Religion and Philosophy in the State*, in *Perspectives Arabes et Médiévales sur la Tradition Scientifique et Philosophique Grecque*, ed. A. Hasnawi, M. Aouad, Peeters, Leuven 1997, pp. 609-621.

<sup>178</sup> Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Alfarabius: De Platonis Philosophia*, ed. F. Rosenthal, R. Walzer, Warburg Institute Press, London 1943, pp. 12-13.

<sup>179</sup> See, G. Bergsträsser, *Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq über die syrischen und arabischen Galen-Übersetzungen, zum ersten mal herausgegeben und übersetzt*, F. A. Brockhaus, Leipzig 1925, pp. 49-50. See as well, P. Kraus, R. Walzer, *Galen's Compendium Timaei Platonis*, Warburg Institute, London 1951, pp. 1-17, 97-98.

(*ta'aqqul*). Here it is obvious that when he refers to the Ancient or Classical view of prudence, al-Fārābī has specifically in mind the Aristotelian account of *phronesis* as presented in book six of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Al-Fārābī is of course entirely conversant with this portion of the work as can be gathered from his description of *phronesis* (*ta'aqqul*) and other Aristotelian intellectual virtues such as deliberation (*rawiyya*) and wisdom (*ḥikma*) in aphorisms thirty-four to forty five of the *Fuṣūl Muntaza'a*. However, what is more significant for our immediate concerns is that in the *Kitāb al-Milla* and the *Iḥsā'al-'Ulūm*, al-Fārābī illustrates his thinking about the workings of *tajriba* and *ta'aqqul* by drawing once again an analogy between the medical and political crafts<sup>180</sup>.

Thus, he claims that when it comes to the application of his art, the true king ought to proceed in a manner similar to that of the excellent physician. The latter applies his trade in light of the lengthy experience (*tajriba*) he has acquired while treating various kinds of ailments<sup>181</sup>. Al-Fārābī insists on the fact that this experience is gained by dealing with particular cases and individuals under specific circumstances and not simply by reading medical manuals or clinical notes<sup>182</sup>. The ideal king similarly will

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<sup>180</sup> See, excerpts [A] and [B]. The reliance on craft-analogy is an important feature of Aristotle's discussion of *prohairesis* in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, see S. Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1991, pp. 181-212. C.D.C. Reeve, *Practices of Reason: Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1992, pp. 73-79. M. Galston briefly discusses al-Fārābī's reliance on a medical analogy; see M. Galston, *Politics and Excellence: The Political Philosophy of Alfarabi*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1990, pp. 101-106.

<sup>181</sup> On the importance of experience in Ancient medicine see, Hippocrates, *On Ancient Medicine*, trans. M. J. Schiefky, E.J. Brill, Leiden 2005. For another significant source see, Galen, *On Medical Experience: The First Edition of the Arabic Version*, ed. R. Walzer, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1944. See as well, L. G. Ballester, *Galen as Medical Practitioner: Problems in diagnosis*, in *Galen: Problems and Prospects*, ed. V. Nutton, The Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, London 1981, pp. 13-47. For a recent analysis of this issue in the Arabic context see, M. Forcada, *Ibn Bajjā on Medicine and Medical Experience*, "Arabic Science and Philosophy", 21, 2011, pp. 111-148.

<sup>182</sup> On clinical notes and case histories in Islamic medicine see, C. Alvarez-Millan, *Practive versus Theory: Tenth-century Case Histories from the Islamic Middle-East*, in *The Year 1000: Medical Practice at the End of the First Millennium*, ed. P. Horden, E. Savage-Smith, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2000, pp. 293-306. See as well, P. E. Pormann, *Case*

have to develop his prudence (*ta'aqqul*) through extensive practical contact with political affairs. Al-Fārābī is emphatic about the concrete nature of this experience (*tajriba*) and how it must involve dealing with palpable actors and situations. Here, the influence of Aristotle is visible in the way al-Fārābī presents *tajriba* and *ta'aqqul* as being primarily concerned with tangible particulars rather than with abstract universals.

At this point, one begins to make out why the medical analogy is so appealing to al-Fārābī. In many ways the comparison between the medical and political craft allows him to harmonize Aristotle's treatment of prudence and Plato's account of political authority. The result is a distinctly Farabian perspective on the nature of political leadership. This outlook comes out clearly when he lists the various attributes of the ideal ruler or true king (*al-malik fī l-ḥaqīqa*). Among these qualities, al-Fārābī highlights specifically the king's rare combination of theoretical wisdom (*ḥikma*) and complete prudence (*ta'aqqul tāmm*)<sup>183</sup>. The assumption is that this unusual ability enables the ideal ruler to seamlessly perform the complementary tasks of grasping the universal nature of human flourishing and of actualizing this vision in a particular socio-political context involving specific individuals.

Unsurprisingly, al-Fārābī conveys this point by comparing the craft of the ideal king to that of the excellent physician. Indeed, al-Fārābī presents the medical doctor as a fitting model because he is altogether acquainted with the universal notions of health, but he also knows how to apply his theoretical learning to particular cases by restoring the well-being of patients and curing their specific diseases<sup>184</sup>. I think that al-Fārābī wants us to see

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*Notes and Clinicians: Galen's Commentary on the Hippocratic Epidemics in the Arabic Tradition*, "Arabic Science and Philosophy", 18, 2008, pp. 247-284.

<sup>183</sup> See, Fārābī, *Perfect State* cit., pp. 244-249. Fārābī, *Fuṣūl* cit., pp. 66-67. For a brief but extremely helpful comparison of al-Fārābī's treatment of the attributes of the ideal ruler in these two texts see, Dunlop, *Aphorisms* cit., pp. 86-87.

<sup>184</sup> This conception of the ideal medical practitioner as a figure who perfectly combines theoretical and hands-on knowledge is influenced by Galen's visions of medical science. Galen develops his thesis notably in his polemical writings against the Methodist and Empiricist schools. See, Galen, *On the Sects for Beginners*, in *Galen: Three Treatises on*

that it is this unique ability to bridge the realms of abstract learning and concrete practice that makes the excellent physician a master of his trade and it is the same combination of theoretical and practical intellectual virtues that makes the ideal sovereign an expert in the virtuous kingly craft and as a result a legitimate king.

#### 4.1-The Virtuous Kingly Craft and the Excellent Physician:

This stance is perceptible in the following two excerpts where al-Fārābī describes the faculties that compose the virtuous kingly craft (*mihna malikiyya fāḍila*) by comparing them to the capacities used by the medical practitioner:

A-“(1) The first virtuous kingly craft (*mihna malikiyya fāḍila ’ulā*) consists in the knowledge of all the actions that help establish the virtuous habits and modes of life in cities and nations. [It consists as well] in the ability to preserve them for [the citizenry], and to safeguard and protect them from the influence of something coming from the ignorant (*jāhiliyya*) ways of life; for these are all diseases that affect the virtuous cities. (2) In this sense, it is like the medical craft (*mihnatu ṭibb*); for the latter consists in the knowledge of all the actions that help establish health in a human being, preserve it for him, and guard it against any disease that might affect him.”<sup>185</sup>

B-“(1) The virtuous kingly craft (*mihna malikiyya fāḍila*) is composed of two faculties: One of these is the faculty for universal rules (*qawānīn kulliyya*). The other is the faculty a human being acquires through lengthy involvement in civic deeds, carrying out actions with respect to particulars and persons in specific cities and [gaining] proficiency in them through experience (*tajriba*) and long observation (*mushāhada*) as it is with medicine. (2) Indeed, a physician becomes a perfect healer only by means of two faculties. One is the faculty for the universals and rules he acquires

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*the Nature of science*, ed. M. Frede, pp. 1-20. For the Arabic version of this work see, M. S. Sālim, ed. *Kitāb Jalinūs fī Firaq al-Ṭibb lil-Muta’allimīn*, al-Hay’a al-Miṣrīya, Cairo 1978. The idea that genuine scientific knowledge results from a combination of empirical and theoretical elements is also characteristic of Galen’s epistemology see, M. Frede, *On Galen’s Epistemology*, in *Galen: Problems and Prospects*, ed. V. Nutton, The Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, London 1981, pp. 65-86. See also, V. Boudon, *Art, Science et Conjecture Chez Galien*, in *Galien et la Philosophie*, eds. J. Barnes, J. Jouanna, Fondation Hardt, Geneva 2003, pp. 269-298.

<sup>185</sup> Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Milla*, ed. M. Mahdi, Dār al-Mashriq, Beirut 2001, pp. 56-57. Translation modified see, Butterworth, *The Political Writings* cit., pp 104-105.



from the medical books. The other is the faculty he attains by lengthy involvement in practicing medicine on the sick and by skill in it from long experience (*tajriba*) with, and observation of, individual bodies. (3) By means of this faculty the physician is able to determine the medicaments and cure with respect to each body in each circumstance. Similarly, the kingly craft is able to determine the actions with respect to each occurrence, each circumstance and each city in each moment only by means of this faculty viz. the experiential (*tajribiyya*) [faculty]<sup>186</sup>

In excerpt [A] al-Fārābī reiterates, but in a more precise fashion, the position stated in the opening aphorisms of the *Fuṣūl Muntaza'a*. Here, the use of the medical analogy is from the start unambiguously associated with the virtuous kingly craft and appears to exclude other forms of political leadership. Even so, the focus of the analogy is clearly similar; we are told that the virtuous king is concerned mostly with his subjects' moral welfare, in the same way that the physician is concerned with his patients' health. Al-Fārābī extends his use of medical terminology by describing the vicious or ignorant ways of life (*siyar jāhiliyya*) as diseases (*'amrād*) that affect the habits of the virtuous citizens.

The association of moral concepts such as vice and virtue with medical notions like health and disease is of course, a common theme in the ethical writings of the time<sup>187</sup>. This is famously illustrated by the title and

<sup>186</sup> Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Iḥṣā' al-'Ulūm*, ed. O. Amin, Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, Cairo 1948, pp. 103-104. Translation slightly modified see, Butterworth, *The Political Writings* cit., pp. 77-78

<sup>187</sup> On the various genres of Arabic ethical writings see, D. Gutas, *Ethische Schriften im Islam*, in *Orientalisches Mittelalter*, ed. W. Heinrichs, AULA-Verlag, Wiesbaden 1990, pp. 346-365. The therapeutic approach in Arabic ethics is noticeable in all three genres listed by Gutas: Popular-philosophical works, the gnomological collections and the *Fürstenspiegel*. Of course the emphasis on ethical therapy is closely linked to similar developments in Ancient philosophy, for an examination of the relationship between Ancient and Arabic ethics see, Th.-A. Druart, *La Philosophie Morale Arabe et l'Antiquité Tardive*, "Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales", 48, 1996, pp. 183-187. On the Galenic influence on Arabic ethics see, G. Strohmaier, *Die Ethik Galens und ihre Rezeption in der Welt des Islams*, in *Galen et la Philosophie*, ed. J. Barnes, J. Jouanna, Fondation Hardt, Geneva 2003, pp. 307-327. See as well, J. N. Mattock, *A Translation of the Arabic Epitome of Galen's Book Peri Ethon*, in *Islamic Philosophy and the Classical Tradition : Essays presented to Richard Walzer on his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. S. M. Stern, A. Hourani, V. Brown, Bruno Cassirer Publishers, Oxford 1972, pp. 235-260. On the therapeutic approach in Ancient philosophy see, R. Sorabji, *Emotion Peace of Mind*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2000. M. Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire : Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*, Princeton University Press,

content of al-Rāzī's treatise on moral improvement the *Ṭibb al-Ruḥānī*. There, al-Rāzī provides a series of dialectical arguments, practical suggestions and rhetorical anecdotes that are supposed to act like remedies against moral diseases such as envy, pride or lust<sup>188</sup>. A similar therapeutic bent is noticeable in the ethical work of al-Fārābī's associate Yaḥyā Ibn 'Adī, the *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq* and in Miskawayh's treatise bearing the same name<sup>189</sup>. However, in the case of al-Fārābī, the therapeutic attitude appears to be less attentive to individual or personal moral guidance or salvation and is mostly focused on collective or socio-political healing.

As a result, al-Fārābī is primarily interested by the question of how a virtuous ruler can establish and preserve the ethical and civil health of the ideal city's inhabitants. A partial answer to this problem is provided in section [B]-1 when al-Fārābī differentiates between the two faculties that constitute the virtuous kingly craft (*mihna malikiyya fāḍila*). The first is a theoretical faculty concerned with universal rules (*qawānīn kullīyya*) and the second is a practical capacity, which is rooted in experience (*tajriba*). Although al-Fārābī is not explicit in this context about the exact nature or content of the *qawānīn kullīyya*, it is obvious that part of what he has in mind is a set of broad ethical principles concerned with human flourishing<sup>190</sup>. This comes out clearly in the

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Princeton 1994. J. Pigeaud, *La Maladie de l'Âme : Étude sur la Relation de l'Âme et du Corps dans la Tradition Médico-philosophique Antique*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1981. P. Hadot, *Exercices Spirituels et Philosophie Antique*, Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, Paris 1993.

<sup>188</sup> See, al-Rāzī, *Opera Philosophica Fragmentaque Quae Supersunt*, ed. P. Kraus, Maṭba'at Būl Bārbīh, Cairo 1939. Arberry's English version of this text is rather free and one should prefer the more recent and faithful French and Spanish translations. See, al-Rāzī, *The Spiritual Physick of Rhazes*, trans. A. J. Arberry, J. Murray, London 1950. For the French version see, al-Rāzī, *La Médecine Spirituelle*, trans. R. Brague, GF Flammarion, Paris 2003. For the Spanish translation see, al-Rāzī, *La Conducta Virtuosa Del Filósofo*, trans. E. Tornero Poveda, Trotta Editorial, Madrid 2004.

<sup>189</sup> See, Yaḥyā Ibn 'Adī, *The Reformation of Morals: A Parallel English-Arabic Text*, trans. S. H. Griffith, Brigham Young University Press, Provo 2002. Ibn Miskawayh, *Traité d'Ethique*, trans. M. Arkoun, Institut Français de Damas, Damas 1970.

<sup>190</sup> On the difference between Aristotle's and al-Fārābī's conception of ethics see, Th.-A. Druart, *Al-Fārābī, Ethics and First Intelligibles*, "Documenti e Studi Sulla Tradizione Filosofica Medievale", 8, 1997, pp.403-423.

following definition of civil philosophy (*falsafa madaniyya*) which al-Fārābī provides a few lines later in the *Iḥsā' al-'Ulūm*:

C-“This science [civil philosophy (*falsafa madaniyya*)] has two parts: (1) One part comprises bringing about cognizance of what happiness is; distinguishing between what it truly is and what it is presumed to be; enumerating the universal voluntary actions, ways of life, moral habits, and states of character that are such as to be distributed in cities and nations, and distinguishing the virtuous ones from the non-virtuous ones. (2) The other part concerns the [concrete] ranking (*tartīb*) of the virtuous states of character and ways of life in [given] cities and nations, [and] the knowledge of the kingly practices by which the virtuous ways of life and actions are established and ranked (*turattab*) among the inhabitants of the cities and the practices by which this ranking and acquired habits are preserved.”<sup>191</sup>

As one would expect, al-Fārābī seems to suggest that the two faculties that characterize the virtuous kingly craft correspond to the two parts that constitute the discipline of civil philosophy (*falsafa madaniyya*). If this is correct, then the content of the *qawānīn kullīyya* should tally to a large extent with the subjects listed in [C]-1. In other words, the theoretical faculty of the kingly craft will be mostly concerned with the task of grasping the nature of human flourishing (*sa'āda*). This will include a detailed understanding of the virtuous qualities that help promote happiness as well as an awareness of the vices that hinder its attainment. Importantly, al-Fārābī also insists on the political dimension of this knowledge. The flourishing he has in mind is obviously related to the specific arrangement and distribution of these virtues within the context of a city or a nation. This knowledge will certainly include al-Fārābī's description of political justice discussed in the preceding chapter.

This impression is confirmed when we turn to an examination of the role the practical faculty is supposed to play. In [C]-2 al-Fārābī enumerates the topics embraced by the second part of civil philosophy. In this passage, he clearly indicates that the practical element of the *falsafa madaniyya* deals with the procedures and methods that help actualize, in a concrete socio-

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<sup>191</sup> Fārābī, *Iḥsā' al-'Ulūm* cit., pp. 104-105

political setting, the abstract ethical knowledge discovered in the first part. In this context, al-Fārābī's use of terms like *tartīb* and *turattab* to describe the work carried out by the practical faculty is quite telling. This terminology is obviously meant to remind us of al-Fārābī's hierarchical analysis of justice in the ideal city. As we have already seen the happiness and flourishing of the *madīna fāḍila* depends on a specific rank ordering of its inhabitants in terms of their virtuous abilities. Beyond that, of course, the idea of *tartīb* is also reminiscent of the scalar order of the cosmos, and it hints as well at al-Fārābī's hierarchical conception of the cardiocentric body. By exploiting the semantic wealth of the term *tartīb* in this manner, al-Fārābī evidently wants us to recall that the cosmic, corporeal and civil structures are analogous (a similar strategy is employed in passage [F] below).

To confirm the depth of this analogy, al-Fārābī appeals at [A]-2 and [B]-2 to the medical metaphor. The first ruler, we are told, ought to proceed like an expert physician, he must grasp the theoretical aspect of human flourishing and then proceed to apply them in a concrete manner; in the same way that the doctor grasps the theoretical aspect of health and preserves it in a specific body. To illustrate this recommendation, al-Fārābī gives a detailed account of the reasoning an excellent physician engages in when attempting to cure a specific case of jaundice. This example is presented as a model of the cooperation that takes place between the theoretical and practical faculties in the medical therapeutic context; a model which of course ought to be emulated by the first kingly craft.

#### 4.2-Medical Practice: Zayd's Case of Jaundice Fever

Al-Fārābī presents this case study in an important passage of the *Kitāb al-Milla*, which I will now quote at length:

- D-“(1) However, when the physician cures, he cures the bodies of individuals and of single beings: Zayd's body, for instance, or Amr's body.  
(2) In curing Zayd's jaundice fever, he does not only rely on his knowledge

that opposites are fought by opposites, or that jaundice fever is alleviated by barley-water. Unless he knows in the case of Zayd's fever more particular things than the [general] ones he learned [in the study of] his craft. (3) So he investigates whether [Zayd's] jaundice fever ought to be relieved by barley-water so that his body is filled with cold and moist qualities or whether barley-water will heal the bodily humour but not let him perspire, and similar things. (4) If barley-water has to be drunk, he is not content to know this in an unqualified way, but needs to know, in addition, what amount has to be drunk, and in what consistency it should be drunk, at what moment of the day it ought to be administered, and in which one of Zayd's feverish states it should be drunk. So he will have to determine that with regards to quantity, quality, and time. It is not possible for him to make these determinations without observation (*mushāhada*) of the sick person, so that his prescription accords with what he observes in the states of the sick person, namely Zayd."<sup>192</sup>

Al-Fārābī assumes at [D]-2 that the doctor will be aware of general therapeutic rules and will also be conscious of more specific prescriptions. For instance, the physician should be thoroughly familiar with the principle that "contraries are fought by contraries". Here, al-Fārābī has obviously in mind one of the most basic notions of Hippocratic and Galenic humoral pathology. Quite simply, this is the view that health consists in the balance of the four bodily humours (black bile, yellow bile, phlegm and blood) and that illness is the product of their imbalance. Therefore, in order to restore the initial equilibrium, one should counter the excess in one of the humours by fostering the development of its opposite elements.

Partly, this reasoning is founded on the idea that each humour is associated with at least one concomitant primary quality (e.g. dry, moist, hot and cold). As a result, conditions that derive from excessive dryness should be counter-balanced by providing a treatment that assists the body in acquiring more moisture. The same reasoning is of course valid in the case of ailments involving disproportionate levels of hotness or coldness<sup>193</sup>.

Based on this general principle, the physician will also be aware of the more

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<sup>192</sup> Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Milla* cit., pp. 57-58. Translation significantly modified see, Butterworth, *The Political Writings* cit., pp. 105-106.

<sup>193</sup> For a succinct and insightful overview of this issue see, Pormann, *Islamic Medicine* cit., pp.42-45.

specific prescription that administering barley water normally cures jaundice. This is because jaundice was believed to be caused by an excess of yellow bile, which has a heating effect on the body<sup>194</sup>. Barley water, on the other hand, was thought to possess certain cooling qualities<sup>195</sup>. Consequently its ingestion, it was assumed, would help counter the nefarious impact of yellow bile and restore the patient's health by moderating his or her feverish state.

However all of this theoretical information is not specific enough to allow for a proper evaluation of Zayd's particular case of jaundice. To emit a diagnosis and provide an adequate treatment the physician will rely on the observation (*mushāhada*) of Zayd's specific symptoms and use his practical experience (*tajriba*) to arrive at a conclusion. Thus, al-Fārābī affirms at [D]-3 that the physician will ensure that the kind of treatment he suggests has no serious side effect in Zayd's case. For instance, a common counter-indication of barley is its astringency, a property it was believed to possess on account of its husk. This is in all likelihood what worries al-Fārābī when he fears that the ingestion of barley water might interfere with the patient's perspiration. As a result, if it is used at all, the composition of the barley water will have to be carefully prepared to avoid such ill effects. Here al-Fārābī might be thinking of Galen's suggestion that the doctor should soak the barley and remove its chaff before boiling it; if this recipe is followed then the barley water produced is "soothing, slippery, moderately watery,

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<sup>194</sup> On the Hippocratic conception of jaundice see, E. Free, N. Papavramidou, *Jaundice in the Hippocratic Corpus*, "Journal of Gastrointestinal Surgery" 11, 2007, 1728-1731. An interesting passage from *Ḥunayn Ibn Ishāq's Masā'il fī 'Ilm al-Ṭibb* which al-Fārābī probably had access to lists the symptoms and possible cure associated with an excess of yellow bile, "What are the signs of an excess of yellow bile, what is to be feared from it, and how can it be recognized? It is indicated by paleness of complexion, a bitter taste and dryness in the mouth, fainting, lack of appetite, rapid pulse and tremor resembling the pricking needles. [...] The [curing] regimen should be cooling and moistening. If the [condition] is not noticed, one has to fear as a result a tertian and burning fever, hot phrenitis, severe skin eruptions, and thirst, as well as lack of appetite". See, R. Y. Ebied, M. J. L. Young, *A Manuscript of Ḥunayn's Masā'il fī 'Ilm al-Ṭibb in the Leeds University Collection*, in *Ḥunayn Ibn Ishāq: Collection d'Articles Publiée à l'Occasion du Onzième Centenaire de sa Mort*, E. J. Brill, Leiden 1975, pp. 264-270.

<sup>195</sup> On Galen's view concerning the benefits, detriments and preparation of barley-water see, Galen, *On Food and Diet*, trans. M. Grant, Routledge, London 2000, pp. 62-68.

quenching of the thirst, [...] and without astringency”<sup>196</sup>. Another possible source on the detailed preparation and multiple therapeutic usage of barley water is Yuḥannā Ibn Māsawayh’s important treatise dedicated exclusively to this subject and aptly named the *Kitāb Mā’ al-Sha’ir*<sup>197</sup>.

Of course, the timing of the remedy’s administration as well as the quantity swallowed will have to be determined in function of Zayd’s needs. Hence, the doctor during his clinical examination will have to find out the exact stage of the fever’s development. Part of the reason for this is that different kinds of fevers were thought to progress along various types of cycles. For instance intermittent fevers could have a tertian, quotidian or quartan cycle<sup>198</sup>. As a result, the remedy would have to be adjusted to correspond to the specific instant the fever had reached in its periodic sequence. Based on this information, the barley water used might be more or less diluted, its degree of astringency could also be modified and in some cases, the doctor might refrain from administering it to the patient altogether.

All of this points to an interesting fact, which S. P. Mattern underlines in her analysis of Galen’s medical case studies<sup>199</sup>. There she notes that in a number of descriptions involving feverish symptoms, Galen focuses on the doctor’s ability to pick out the opportune moment (*kairos*) for the treatment’s delivery. To ensure the success of his cure, the physician must plan his intervention with regards to the highest point of the feverish attack (*paroxysmos*). This instant of crisis is extremely important since it is at this time that the fever either peaks and starts to slowly subside or if it is not properly treated it might suddenly gain strength and threaten the patient’s life. As such, the correct identification of the opportune moment (*kairos*)

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<sup>196</sup> Galen, *On Food* cit., pp. 64-65.

<sup>197</sup> Yuḥannā Ibn Māsawayh, *Kitāb Mā’ al-Sha’ir*, ed. P. Sbath, Imprimerie de l’Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale, Cairo 1939.

<sup>198</sup> See, R. Wittern, *Galen’s Intermittent Fever*, “History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences”, 11, 1989, pp. 3-22.

<sup>199</sup> S. P. Mattern, *Galen and the Rhetoric of Healing*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 2008, pp. 60-68, 159-161.

represents, according to Galen, a true test of the doctor's training and skills. He must bring to bear all of his theoretical knowledge as well as his practical experience and his observational abilities to solve this puzzle successfully<sup>200</sup>. It seems to me that this attitude corresponds to the position presented by al-Fārābī in passage [D]. There as well, successful therapy is associated with the physician's ability to meaningfully combine observation (*mushāhada*), experience (*tajriba*) and theoretical knowledge.

#### 4.3-Treating the City as a Body:

Al-Fārābī obviously wants us to understand that the ideal ruler ought to practice the first kingly craft in a similar fashion, by adapting his theoretical insight to a variety of practical contexts and situations. This comes out quite distinctly in a number of important passages where the medical analogy plays again a prominent role:

E- "(1) With respect to our bodies, it is not possible for us to acquire all the sorts of health and its temperaments, or its constitutional elements, its customs, the kind of dwelling particular to it, the art by which to make a living, or what is similar to that. [...] For bodies in the condition that has been described, it is not up to the virtuous physician to obtain either the most perfect levels or the highest degrees of health. It is up to him to obtain as much health as is possible for their nature. [...] (2) It is not up to the virtuous leader and the supreme ruler to establish virtues in someone the nature and substance of whose soul do not accept these virtues. For these kinds of souls, it is up to him to obtain as much of the virtues as is possible for them and for the [other] inhabitants of the city."<sup>201</sup>

F- "(1) The physician treats each member that is ill only in accordance with its relationship to the whole body and the members adjacent to it and tied to it. He does so by giving it a treatment that provides it with a health by which it is useful to the whole body and is useful to the members adjacent to it and tied to it. (2) In the same way, the governor of the city should rule over every

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<sup>200</sup> For a detailed analysis of Galen's view of the theoretical and practical aspects of medical therapy see, P. J. Van Der Eijk, *Galen's Therapeutic*, in *The Cambridge Companion to Galen*, ed. R. J. Hankinson, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2008, pp. 283-303.

<sup>201</sup> Fārābī, *Fuṣūl* cit., pp. 99-100. Translation slightly modified see, Butterworth, *The Political Writings* cit., pp. 64-65.



one of the parts of the city, whether it is a small part such as a single human being or a large one like a single household. He treats it and provides it with good in relation to the whole (*jumlata*) of the city and to each of the rest of the parts of the city by endeavouring to make the good that part provides a good that does not harm the whole of the city or anything among the rest of its parts, but rather a good useful to the city in its entirety and to each of its parts in accordance with its rank (*martabatuhu*) of usefulness to the city.”<sup>202</sup>

G-“I say the gauge by which we assess actions is patterned on the gauge by which we assess whatever imparts healthiness, and the gauge of what imparts healthiness is [relative to] the conditions of the body for which we seek healthiness; for the median in what imparts healthiness can be grasped only when brought into relation with bodies and assessed by reference to environmental conditions. Equally, the gauge of actions is [relative to] the conditions surrounding the actions, and the median state in the actions can be achieved only when compared and assessed by reference to their surrounding conditions.”<sup>203</sup>

H-“When a single member [of the body] is touched by corruption of which it is feared that it will be communicated to the rest of the other members adjacent to it, it is amputated and done away with for the sake of preserving others. In the same way, when a part of the city is touched by corruption of which communication to others is feared, it ought to be ostracized and sent away for the improvement of those remaining.”<sup>204</sup>

Unmistakeably, al-Fārābī’s argument in the first excerpt draws on his analysis, which we have already touched on in our preceding chapter, of the hierarchal nature of human virtues. Al-Fārābī expects the first ruler to be thoroughly acquainted with the relative standing of each moral and intellectual excellence. For instance, he should be aware of the fact that military aptitude is superior to proficiency in trade or agriculture but inferior to political prudence and philosophical wisdom. Beyond that, the virtuous leader is also supposed to have the ability to evaluate these dispositions when they are present in any given agent. This skill will help him determine the kind of education and training each specific person ought to receive. Of

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid., pp. 24.

<sup>203</sup> Fārābī, *Tanbih* cit., pp. 238-239. Translation modified see, Reisman, *Classical Arabic Philosophy Anthology*, cit., pp.108-109.

<sup>204</sup> Fārābī, *Fuṣūl* cit., pp. 42-43. Translation slightly modified see, Butterworth, *The Political Writings* cit., pp. 24-25.

course, as indicated in section [F]-2, the training in question will be correlated with the attribution of a certain rank (*rutba*) within the city's stratified social structure. Throughout this passage, al-Fārābī warns us against the common mistake of trying to actualize abstract ideals of human perfection in all types of individuals without any regard for their concrete dispositions. In other words, the theoretical knowledge of the virtuous king must be guided by his experience (*tajriba*) and observation (*mushāhada*) of particular instances of the citizens' psychological, environmental and social life.

In this sense, al-Fārābī also assumes that the competent ruler will be familiar with the external factors that affect human mores<sup>205</sup>. Indeed, in the *Siyāsa al-Madaniyya*, borrowing from the Hippocratic text *On Airs, Waters and Places*, al-Fārābī emphasizes the influence of local climates, diets and geographical locations to account for the variety in human customs, languages, habits and character<sup>206</sup>. For instance, he claims that the nomadic inhabitants of barren steppe or desert lands, like certain Arabic or Turkish tribes, tend to be irascible and exhibit a love of domination (*ghulba*) and sexual pleasure<sup>207</sup>. Surely, what al-Fārābī wants us to realize here is that the virtuous manner of ruling nomadic populations will be substantially different from the way one would correctly govern a more sedentary and pacific society. Of course, in section [E], al-Fārābī's focus is less on the peculiarity of character specific to certain groups and more concerned with the

<sup>205</sup> Fārābī, *Siyāsa* cit., pp. 69-71.

<sup>206</sup> See also, Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf*, ed. M. Maḥdī, Dār al-Mashreq, Beirut 2004, pp. 134-135. For the Arabic version of Hippocrates' *Airs, Waters and Places*, see M.C. Lyons, J. N. Mattock, *Kitāb Buqrāṭ fi'l-Amrāḍ al-Bilādiyya*, Cambridge Middle East Center-W. Heffer, Cambridge 1969. Another possible source of influence is Galen's commentary on this work see, G. Strohmaier, *La Question de L'influence du Climat dans la Pensée Arabe et le Nouveau Commentaire de Galien sur le Traité Hippocratique des Airs, Eaux et Lieux*, in *Perspectives Arabes et Médiévales sur la Tradition Scientifique et Philosophique Grecque*, ed. A. Hasnawi, M. Aouad, Peeters, Leuven 1997, pp. 209-216. Of course, discussions of climactic and geographic influence on human character and habits are also present in the second book of Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* see, Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, ed. F. E. Robbins, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass 1994, pp. 116-128.

<sup>207</sup> Fārābī, *Siyāsa* cit., pp. 102-103.

dispositions of given individuals; even so the general argument remains essentially the same. In both cases, the first ruler must adapt his theoretical framework and actions to fit the particular nature and dispositions of specific agents and make the best, so to speak, out of the “human material” he is given.

In section [G], al-Fārābī brings together the Aristotelian notion that virtue is an intermediate condition between two extreme states and the Hippocratic view that health is the result of a balance between the four humours. His object when drawing this parallel is again to underline the importance of the situational context when evaluating the appropriateness of human actions. According to him, the relevance of this context is as significant to our ethical judgement as the surrounding environment is to our assessment of bodily health. Therefore, when trying to evaluate whether an action is courageous or cowardly, moderate or immoderate, magnanimous or petty, the particular circumstances will have to be taken into consideration. This is especially relevant when the ideal leader attempts to impart certain virtues to the citizenry. For instance, he will know that the kind of bravery required by a person during warfare is different from the courage needed in a time of peace. As a result, the type of training recommended to develop this virtue in the military class will be different from the one used to instil it in a set of merchants or peasants. In other words, the true king will have to be aware of the variety of accidents that are associated with the particular realization of each one of the virtues<sup>208</sup>.

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<sup>208</sup> It is important to note here that in the excerpts listed above, al-Fārābī works implicitly with the idea of voluntary intelligibles (*ma'qūlāt l-'irādiya*). This notion is introduced in the *Taḥṣīl al-Sa'āda*, where al-Fārābī differentiates between natural and voluntary intelligibles: “For instance, moderation, magnificence and the like are voluntary intelligibles. When we decide to make them exist in actuality, the accidents that accompany them at a certain time will be different from the accidents that accompany them at another time, and the accidents they have when they exist in one nation will be different from those they have in another nation. In some of these [voluntary intelligibles], the accidents change from hour to hour, in others from day to day, in others from month to month, in others from year to year, in others from decade to decade, and still in others they change after many decades. Therefore,

The same idea appears in passage [H] but this time it concerns the king's precise knowledge of vices rather than virtues. In this section, al-Fārābī appeals to a common analogy drawn between bodily amputation and political ostracism. The true king should cast away rebellious or dangerous citizens in the same way that a doctor removes any member of the body infected by a contagious illness. Of course, the idea of casting away or pre-emptively exiling a person who is deemed a threat to the city's welfare has a long tradition in antiquity<sup>209</sup>. However, what is interesting in the case of al-Fārābī is that he develops a striking analysis of this problem by providing a detailed taxonomy of the types of individuals that should be exiled or otherwise silenced. These troublesome characters are called the *nawābit* or weeds because they "sprout" in the virtuous city like unwanted growths<sup>210</sup>. They are classified in six separate groups: the *Mutaqanniṣūn*, *Muḥarrifa*, *Māriqa*, *Mustarshidūn*, *Mutazayyifūn* and *Mutaḥayyirūn*<sup>211</sup>. When he brings up the issue of ostracism, al-Fārābī expects the virtuous ruler to be aware of this classification of 'diseased' or 'infected' characters and to be able to spot the various persons who conform to these descriptions. Thus, someone who

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whoever wills to bring any of them into actual existence outside the soul ought to know the variable accidents that must accompany it in the specific period at which he seeks to bring it into existence and in the determined place in the inhabited part of the earth. [...] And he ought to know which of these accidents are common to all nations, to some nations, or to one city over a long period, or pertain to some of them specifically over a short period [war and peace]". See, Fārābī, *Tahṣīl al-Sa'āda* cit., pp. 147-148. Translation slightly modified see, M. Mahdi, *Alfarabi: Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1969, pp. 26-27. On the role of the voluntary intelligibles in al-Fārābī's ethical and political thought see, Th.-A. Druart, *Al-Fārābī on the Practical and Speculative Aspects of Ethics*, in *Moral and Political Philosophies in the Middle Ages*, vol. 1, ed. B. C. Bazán, E. Andújar, L. G. Sbrocchi, Legas, Ottawa 1995, pp. 476-485. As well as, H. Zghal, *Métaphysique et Science Politique: Les Intelligibles Volontaires dans le Tahṣīl al-Sa'āda d'Al-Fārābī*, "Arabic Science and Philosophy", 8, 1998, pp. 169-194.

<sup>209</sup> See, S. Forsdyke, *Exile, Ostracism and Democracy: The Politics of Expulsion in Ancient Greece*. Princeton University Press, Princeton 2005.

<sup>210</sup> Fārābī, *Siyāsa* cit., pp. 104-106.

<sup>211</sup> P. Crone and I. Alon provide an excellent description of each one of these categories see, I. Alon, *Fārābī's Funny Flora: Al-Nawābit as Opposition*, "Arabica", 38, 1990, pp. 56-90. P. Crone, *Al-Fārābī's Imperfect Constitutions*, "Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph" 57, 2004, pp. 191-228. See as well, M. S. Kochin, *Weeds: Cultivating the Imagination in Medieval Arabic Political Philosophy*, "Journal of the History of Ideas", 60, 1999, pp. 399-416.

merely pays lip service to the ideal city's ethical code and then pursues behind closed doors other goals like the excessive accumulation of wealth or honour will be recognized as a *mutaqanniṣ* i.e. an opportunist. Similarly, an individual who disrupts the epistemological foundations of the virtuous city by expressing his or her perplexity through a badly digested assortment of sceptical and relativist positions, will be identified as a *mutaḥayyir*<sup>212</sup>. Al-Fārābī adds, that these people tend to wallow in their confusion and puzzlement and thus suffer in a permanent state of anxiety. Interestingly, this renders them sometimes less dangerous than other types of *nawābit* such as the *mutaqanniṣūn* for instance. As a result, exile might not be the only treatment recommended in their case, the ideal king might prescribe a different course of action. In fact, al-Fārābī lists a series of remedies (*'ilāj*) that have to be tailored to the specific conditions of each particular kind of 'weed'. These 'civil cures' include admonishment, reformatory work, jailing and ultimately ostracism.

Once again, al-Fārābī expects the true king seamlessly to integrate his theoretical knowledge and his practical skill by relying on his experience and observation. Hence, on the one hand, he must have a general acquaintance with the different kinds of vicious lifestyles. On the other hand, he ought to possess as well the aptitude of recognizing these vices in particular situations and of prescribing the right treatments at the appropriate moment. I believe, that at this point, it has become abundantly clear how al-Fārābī models the theoretical and practical expertise of the true king (*al-malik fī l-ḥaqīqa*) on the therapeutic method of the excellent physician. This combination, we shall see immediately, is also apparent in the way al-Fārābī amalgamates Platonic and Aristotelian traits to describe the first ruler (*ra'īs l-'awwal*).

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<sup>212</sup> On the possibility that al-Fārābī was reacting to a mood of doctrinal skepticism in contemporary intellectual circles see, P. L. Heck, *Doubts about the Religious Community (Milla) in al-Fārābī and the Brethren of Purity*, in *In the Age of al-Fārābī: Arabic Philosophy in Fourth/Tenth Century*, ed. P. Adamson, Warburg Institute, London 2008, pp. 195-213.

#### 4.4- Is Prophecy a necessary feature of the Kingly Craft ?

R. Walzer has correctly pointed out that al-Fārābī's depiction of the ideal ruler reflects to a large extent Plato's presentation of the philosopher-king in book six of the *Republic*<sup>213</sup>. Indeed, many of the perfect sovereign's twelve inborn dispositions (*khiṣāl*) listed by al-Fārābī correspond to intellectual and ethical traits possessed by the Platonic philosopher-king. Attributes such as physical fitness, ease of learning and understanding, excellence in memorizing, the love of truth, knowledge and justice and the dislike of money, worldly goods and pleasures are all shared by the Farabian and Platonic rulers alike. Of course, one must complement these features with significant Aristotelian elements, to make the portrait of the *ra'īs al-'awwal* more precise.

Thus, if we add to the twelve inborn dispositions (*khiṣāl*), the six conditions (*sharā'it*) that the ruler must slowly acquire and develop, then our depiction of his nature will be complete. These conditions are listed in the following excerpts [K] and [L]. There we are told, predictably, that the first ruler must above all acquire a perfect form of prudence (*ta'aqqul tāmm*) along with theoretical wisdom (*ḥikma*). The other requirements pertain mostly to the functions of public speaking and military leadership. Thus, the true king ought to be able to lead an army into war and he must also master the art of rhetoric and eloquence:

J-“The true king (*al-malik fī l-ḥaqīqa*): he is the supreme ruler and the one in whom six conditions (*sharā'it*) come together: theoretical wisdom (*ḥikma*), complete prudence (*ta'aqqul tāmm*), excellent persuasion, excellent imaginative evocation (*jawdatu takhayyul*), bodily capability for struggle, and having nothing in his body that prevents him from carrying out the things pertaining to military struggle (*jihād*). One in whom all these qualities come together is the model, someone to be imitated in his way of life and his

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<sup>213</sup> Fārābī, *Perfect State* cit., pp. 444-451.

actions, someone whose declarations and counsels are to be accepted and one who may govern as he thinks and wishes.”<sup>214</sup>

K-“He is the man who knows every action by which happiness can be reached. This is the first condition for being a ruler. Moreover, he should be a good orator and able to rouse [other people’s] imagination by well-chosen words. He should be able to lead people well along the right path to happiness and to the actions by which happiness is reached. He should in addition be in excellent physical condition to lead in times of war (*ḥarb*). This is the ruler over whom no one else rules, he is the *imām* and the first ruler (*raʾīs l-ʿawwal*) of the virtuous city.”<sup>215</sup>

It is crucial to notice that when al-Fārābī uses the expression *jawdatu takhayyul* in passage [J], he is referring to a kind of epideictic rhetorical ability<sup>216</sup>. In fact, he goes to great lengths to explain the nature of this “excellence in imaginative evocation” in aphorism fifty-five. In that segment, al-Fārābī defines *jawdatu takhayyul* as the capacity to arouse strong passions in the souls of the listeners. Emotions such as fear, disgust, anger, or pleasure are stirred up by constructing evocative images and similes. These intense feelings in turn will lead the listeners to adopt a certain mode of behaviour, whereby they will either pursue or flee the imagined objects and fancied notions. In this light, it is evident that the *jawdatu takhayyul* differs substantially from the idea of a prophetic imagination. The most obvious disparity pertains to the epistemic status of these two capacities. While the prophetic imagination receives its visual imprints directly from the active intellect<sup>217</sup>, the *jawdatu takhayyul* does not share this noetic privilege. Instead the imaginary production it conjures up appears to be entirely the work of the king’s rhetorical ability.

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<sup>214</sup> Fārābī, *Fuṣūl* cit., pp. 66-67. Translation slightly modified see, Butterworth, *The Political Writings* cit., pp. 37-38.

<sup>215</sup> Fārābī, *Perfect State* cit., pp. 245-247.

<sup>216</sup> For al-Fārābī’s view on rhetoric see, J. Langhade, M. Grignaschi, *Al-Fārābī: Deux Ouvrages Inédits sur la Rhétorique*. Dār al-Mashreq, Beirut 1971. See as well, J. W. Watt, *From Themistius to Al-Farabi: Platonic Political Philosophy and Aristotle’s Rhetoric in the East*, “Rhetorica”, 13, 1995, pp. 17-41. See also, D. Black, *Logic and Aristotle’s Rhetoric and Poetics in Medieval Arabic Philosophy*, E. J. Brill, Leiden 1990.

<sup>217</sup> Fārābī, *Perfect State* cit., pp. 211-227.

At this point, an important question arises: Is prophecy, as has often been argued<sup>218</sup>, an essential feature of the kingly craft? I think the answer is less straightforward than it might be thought. D. Dunlop has already pointed out the inconsistency of al-Fārābī's position on this topic<sup>219</sup>. In the *Ārā' ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, it is clear that the ideal ruler must also be a prophet<sup>220</sup>. However, in the *Fuṣūl Muntaza'a* the same requirement is not put forward and as we have just seen, it is sufficient for the true king to simply possess an "excellent imaginative evocation" (*jawdatu takhayyul*). Moreover, in his definition of the kingly craft al-Fārābī does not include prophecy (*nubuwwa*) or revelation (*waḥy*) in his itemization of the qualities possessed by the *malik fī l-ḥaqīqa*<sup>221</sup>.

Dunlop suggests a possible solution. He speculates that al-Fārābī might have simply changed his mind and that the *Fuṣūl Muntaza'a* having been written sometimes after the *Madīna al-Fāḍila* and shortly before his death, probably contains his final thoughts on the subject<sup>222</sup>. R. Walzer proposes a different chronology. He argues that al-Fārābī continued revising

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<sup>218</sup> F. Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1958, pp. 10-15. E. I. J. Rosenthal, *The Place of Politics in the Philosophy of Al-Fārābī*, "Islamic Culture", 29, 1955, pp. 157-178. H. A. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna and Averroes, on Intellect*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1992, pp. 58-63. R. Walzer, *Al-Fārābī's Theory of Prophecy and Divination*, in *Greek into Arabic: Essays on Islamic Philosophy*, Bruno Cassirer Publishers, Oxford 1962, pp. 206-219. W. C. Streetman, "If it were God who sent them": Aristotle and Al-Fārābī on Prophetic Vision, "Arabic Science and Philosophy", 18, 2008, pp. 211-246.

<sup>219</sup> D. Dunlop, *Aphorisms* cit., pp. 86-89. In fact, according to J. Macy one can find as many as four different positions on this issue in al-Fārābī's work: In the *Madīna al-Fāḍila* the ideal king is endowed with *nubuwwa* and *waḥy*, in the *Siyāsa al-Madaniyya*, he possesses only *waḥy*, in the *Fuṣūl*, as we have already seen, he requires neither, this is also the case in the *Taḥṣīl al-Sa'āda*, where the ideal ruler is said to merely invent (*ikhtara'a*) religious images to deliver his message to his subjects. See J. Macy *Prophecy in Al-Fārābī and Maimonides*, in *Maimonides and Philosophy* eds. S. Pines, Y. Yovel, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, Dordrecht 1986, pp. 185-201. On al-Fārābī's view of how religious imagery can be used to communicate philosophical insight see, P. Vallat, *Farabi et L'École d'Alexandrie* cit., pp. 297-346.

<sup>220</sup> Fārābī, *Perfect State* cit., pp. 241-247.

<sup>221</sup> See, Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Milla* cit., pp. 56-59, *Iḥsa' al-'Ulūm* cit., pp. 102-107.

<sup>222</sup> D. Dunlop, *Aphorisms* cit., pp. 9-17, 88.



the *Madīna al-Fāḍila* well into the end of his philosophical career<sup>223</sup> and believes that this treatise was in fact “the last of his extant works”<sup>224</sup>. Part of the issue, as F. W. Zimmerman fittingly indicates is that the available evidence makes the precise dating of al-Fārābī’s writings notably difficult<sup>225</sup>. In light of this, it would seem that one should treat arguments based on the relative chronology of his works with caution. A safer option might be to simply recognize that the various positions on this topic betray a genuine tension in al-Fārābī’s philosophical project<sup>226</sup>. Averroes, whose commentary on Plato’s *Republic* is greatly influenced by the “Second Teacher”, offers an interesting solution to this predicament. After quoting al-Fārābī by affirming that “philosopher”, “king”, “lawgiver” and “*imām*” are equivalent terms, Averroes broaches the question of prophecy and asks whether the ideal ruler should also be a prophet? His answer is straightforward; prophecy is a desirable but not a necessary requirement to occupy the highest political office. In other words, a sovereign who exhibits all the other traits but is not endowed with *nubuwwa* or *waḥy* will still be deemed a perfect king<sup>227</sup>.

I think that the same lesson could be retained from the relevant sections of the *Fuṣul Muntaza’a*. The main thrust of al-Fārābī’s argument in that context is to define the various components of the *mihna malikiyya fāḍila*. As a result, he is focused on listing all the characteristics necessary to insure competence and expertise in the theoretical and practical parts of this art. From this perspective, his omission of prophecy is not a spurning of the

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<sup>223</sup> Fārābī, *Perfect State* cit., pp. 20-21.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., pp. 1, line 27-28.

<sup>225</sup> F. W. Zimmerman, *De Interpretatione* cit., pp. xxiii-xxiv.

<sup>226</sup> In fact, as A. Melamed indicates, many of the later debates in Jewish philosophy on the issue of the ‘philosopher-king-prophet’ are greatly influenced by the ambiguities inherent in al-Fārābī’s treatment. See, A. Melamed, *The Philosopher-King in Medieval and Renaissance Jewish Political Thought*, SUNY Press, Albany 2003, pp. 1-23, 75-111.

<sup>227</sup> “Hence these names are, as it were, synonymous- i.e., ‘philosopher’, ‘king’, ‘lawgiver’; and so also is ‘*imām*’, since, *imām* in Arabic means one who is followed in his actions. [...] As to whether it should be made a condition that he [the ideal ruler] be a prophet, why there is room here for [penetrating] investigation [...]. Perhaps if this were so, it would be with respect to what is preferable, not out of necessity.” see, R. Lerner, *Averroes on Plato’s Republic*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1974, pp. 72-73.

qualities of *nubuwwa* and *waḥy* but simply an indication that these traits, while attractive, are not necessary to insure proficiency in the virtuous kingly craft.

#### 4.5- The Argument from Expertise: The Kingly Craft and the Legitimate Use of Power.

Al-Fārābī's analysis of the kingly craft culminates in what might be called an argument from expertise. In one way, the argument is rather straightforward. It is simply that a ruler's political authority is legitimate if, and only if, that ruler has the right qualification; namely that he possesses the highest level of expertise in the virtuous kingly craft. Al-Fārābī goes a little further however, as he presents a slightly more arresting version of this argument in passages [J] and [K]. There, he asserts that if the condition of expertise is fulfilled then the virtuous king is the legitimate king irrespective of his ability or inability to command power and have control over a certain population. In other words, al-Fārābī makes expertise in the kingly craft the sole and sufficient condition of political legitimacy. This detail is of course significant, since it enables him to considerably reduce the role played by force (*taghallub*) and dominion (*sulṭa*) in his analysis of political justification.

L-“(1) The king is king by means of the kingly craft, the art of governing cities, and the ability to use the kingly craft at any moment whatsoever as a leader over a city-whether he is reputed for his art or not, finds tools to use or not, finds a group who accepts him or not, is obeyed or not. (2) In the same way, the physician is a physician by means of the medical craft – whether he is recognized by people for it or not, is furnished with the tools of his art or not, comes upon sick persons who accept his statement or not. Nor is his medicine diminished by his not having any of these. (3) Similarly, the king is king by means of the craft and the ability to use the [kingly] art-whether he has dominion (*tasallaṭa*) over a group or not, is honoured or not, is wealthy or poor.”<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> Fārābī, *Fuṣūl* cit., pp. 49-50. Translation slightly modified see, Butterworth, *The Political Writings* cit., pp. 28-29.

M-“(1) The true philosopher-[king] is the one mentioned before. If after reaching this stage no use is made of him, the fact that he is of no use to others is not his fault but the fault of those who either do not listen or are not of the opinion that they should listen to him. Therefore, the king or the imam is king and imam by virtue of his skill and art regardless of whether or not anyone acknowledges him, whether or not he is obeyed, whether or not he is supported in his purpose by any group; (2) just as the physician is a physician by virtue of his skill and his ability to heal the sick, whether or not there are sick men for him to heal, whether or not he finds tools to use his activity, whether he is prosperous or poor, not having any of these things does not do away with his medical skill. (3) Similarly, neither the *imamate* of the *imam*, the philosophy of the philosopher, nor the kingship of the king is done away with by his not having tools to use in his activities or men to employ in reaching his purpose.”<sup>229</sup>

It is important to notice how at [L]-2 and [M]-2 al-Fārābī consistently relies on the medical analogy to advance his argument from expertise. Thus, he claims that the competence of the physician is unaffected by external factors such as the number of patients he treats, the availability of his medical equipment or the magnitude of the financial remuneration he receives. Rather, expertise in medicine depends entirely on qualities that are intrinsic to the agent, namely the doctor’s medical knowledge and his therapeutic skills. As long as an agent possesses these essential features then, favourable or unfavourable external factors notwithstanding, he or she can rightly be called a doctor or a physician. As we have already seen, al-Fārābī, believes that the same reasoning holds true in the case of the kingly craft: If an agent’s competence in the virtuous kingly craft obtains, then he can legitimately be called a king (*malik fī l-ḥaqīqa*).

Why does al-Fārābī commit himself to such a specific version of this argument? Part of the answer, I believe, is that this position allows him to reject more forcefully a number of alternative justifications of political authority. This is apparent already in the way the argument is framed in excerpts [J] and [K]. There al-Fārābī disapprovingly hints at other sources of

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<sup>229</sup> Fārābī, *Taḥṣīl al-Sa’āda* cit., pp. 195-196. Translation slightly modified see, Mahdi, *Alfarabi* cit., pp. 48-49.

political power such as obedience, wealth, popularity or reputation. This line of thought is more clearly expressed in the following excerpt where he explicitly lists and dismisses these sources:

N-“ (1) A group of others is of the opinion that they do not apply the name king to anyone who has the kingly craft without being obeyed and honoured in a city. Others add wealth to that. And others are of the opinion to add to that dominion (*al-tasalluṭ*) by conquest (*qahr*), humiliation (*idhlāl*), terror (*tarhīb*) and provoking fear (*takhwīf*). (2) None of these are among the stipulations of kingship. Yet they are results that sometimes follow the kingly craft, and it is therefore presumed that they are kingship.”<sup>230</sup>

In [N]-1, al-Fārābī presents an interesting objection to his own position, which he attributes to a group of unnamed adversaries. The counter-argument they put forward starts with the view that competence in the kingly craft provides insufficient ground for a full-fledged justification of civil authority. Their contention is that a number of supplementary criteria are required to buttress that initial claim. In their eyes, mastery of the kingly craft would have to be complemented by a series of other conditions such as the ability to command power (*sulṭa*), extract wealth (most certainly via taxation) and receive honours from a given population.

Al-Fārābī's rebuttal is relatively simple; he accuses his opponents in section [N]-2 of making a significant blunder by confusing the external effects of the exercise of authority and the sources of its legitimacy. Hence, he asserts that while the use of legitimate civil power will often require the employment of compulsion, violence and taxation, the ability to coerce, subdue and tax is simply a manifestation, not a justification, of sovereignty. To illustrate al-Fārābī's thinking here, it might be helpful to resort to his favourite analogy. The expert physician during the practice of his trade will rely on the use of certain instruments such as cupping utensils or scalpels. However, the mere ability to pick up a scalpel or any other surgical tool and

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<sup>230</sup> Fārābī, *Fuṣūl* cit., pp. 49-50. Translation slightly modified see, Butterworth, *The Political Writings* cit., pp. 28.

to use it on a sick person by making an incision in the affected area is not an indication of medical expertise. Al-Fārābī wants us to see that this is also the case when it comes to political practices. Coercion and violence are simply implements in the kingly craft's large apparatus of persuasive techniques. In the hands of a competent ruler they will be used correctly to promote the moral and ethical flourishing of the city's inhabitants. In contrast, if violence is employed by an unqualified ruler to achieve greater personal power or financial gains, then the outcome of his coercive actions will often be detrimental to the inhabitants' general well being and prosperity. As such, the only valid factor when deciding whether the use of civil authority is legitimate or not remains expertise in the kingly craft. Based on this view, al-Fārābī finally draws the substantial and concomitant lesson that if a sovereign is ignorant of the *mihna malikiyya fāḍila* then his rule is effectively illegitimate:

O-“Those whose leadership is ignorant should not be named kings at all. For they have no need in their [ethical] states, actions and administrations either of theoretical or of practical philosophy (*falsafa al-naẓariya wa lā l-'amaliyya*). In fact, each one of them can attain his purpose in the city and nation under his rule, by using his experiential faculty (*quwwa tajribiyya*). [This faculty] is developed by pursuing the kind of actions that allow [the ignorant ruler] to obtain what he intends to and to attain the goods he desires.”<sup>231</sup>

In this excerpt al-Fārābī makes it abundantly clear that the ignorant rulers' incompetence stems from their inability to make use of theoretical and practical philosophy. This is, of course, just another way of saying that they are essentially incapable of combining the universal ethical rules (*qawānīn kulliyya*) and prudential aspects of the kingly craft. Notably, they are gravely unaware of the providential order of the world and the dispositional hierarchy inherent in the human species; instead when devising their institutions and staffing their administration, these rulers rely for the most part on their

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<sup>231</sup> Fārābī, *Iḥsa' al-'Ulūm* cit., pp. 106-107.

experiential faculty (*quwwa tajribiyya*). It is important to notice here, that al-Fārābī carefully avoids the use of the word *ta'aqqul* when referring to this particular capacity. Part of the reason for this is that when experience and observation (*tajriba wa mushāhada*) are employed to attain non-virtuous goals their usage is no longer an instance of prudence; rather, al-Fārābī suggests, following Aristotle, that this kind of practical deliberation is more appropriately called cunning or shrewdness (*dahā*)<sup>232</sup>. In other words, al-Fārābī highlights the fact that practical experience on its own and unaided by a theoretical grasp of ethical excellence and cosmic justice, is incapable of guiding us towards human flourishing.

This criticism recalls the Platonic distinction made between genuine crafts (*techne/mihna*) like medicine that draw on a scientific body of knowledge and other practical pursuits like cookery or rhetoric that rely simply on empirical knack and loose rules of thumb<sup>233</sup>. Importantly, it is the same sort of concern that induces Galen to distance himself from the Empiricist school by insisting that authentic medical knowledge requires also a thorough grounding in theoretical learning<sup>234</sup>. We are now in a better position to understand why ignorant rulers are never compared to expert physicians by al-Fārābī. Indeed, unlike the *malik fī l-ḥaqqā* who is aware of all the conceptual and practical components of the *mihna malikiyya fāḍila*, these sovereigns are not masters of their trade. As a result, they are at best benign charlatans and at worst cunning, oppressive tyrants but in all cases their rule is irrevocably vicious and illegitimate<sup>235</sup>.

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<sup>232</sup> Arist. N.E. VI, 12. Fārābī, *Fuṣūl* cit., pp. 55-56. Interestingly, in his letter on the intellect al-Fārābī talks about *Mu'awiya* in these terms see, Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Risāla fī l-'aql*, ed. M. Bouyges, Imprimerie Catholique, Beirut 1948, pp. 9-12.

<sup>233</sup> *Gorgias*, 501 a-c.

<sup>234</sup> M. Frede, *On the Sects* cit., pp. xxxi-xxxiv

<sup>235</sup> Here one can notice al-Fārābī's indebtedness to contemporary debates on professional deontology and the threat of charlatanism in Arabic medicine see, P. Pormann, *The Physician and the Other: Images of the Charlatan in Medieval Islam*, "Bulletin of the History of Medicine", 79, 2005, pp.189-227. See also, Al-Ruhāwī, *Adab* cit., pp. 80-92.

## CONCLUSION:

### Civil Science, Medicine and Cosmic Justice

Al-Fārābī's use of a medical idiom to describe civil science (*'ilm al-madani*) considerably influenced the development of Medieval Arabic and Jewish philosophy. This was especially true in Andalusia, where thinkers such as Ibn Bājja, Ibn Rushd and Maimonides embraced this approach. For instance, in his *magnum opus* the *Tadbīr al-Mutawaḥḥid*, Ibn Bājja appeals several times to arguments based on medical language and analogies to advance his philosophical position. Thus, he affirms that the households contained in ignorant cities are unnatural by comparing them to infectious diseases. In the same vein, when contrasting the virtuous and vicious ways of life, he argues that, just as bodily health is one and its illnesses many, so the virtuous way of life is unique and the vicious lifestyles numerous. In fact, Ibn Bājja depicts his entire project in the *Tadbīr al-Mutawaḥḥid* in therapeutic terms. His purpose, he claims, is to develop an ethical 'regimen' that will shelter the virtuous solitary citizen (*al-mutawaḥḥid*) from the corrupt environment of ignorant polities in the same way that a physician's preventive care insulates his patient from the surrounding sickness and malady<sup>236</sup>.

The use of medical phraseology is equally pronounced in the writings of Ibn Rushd. He begins his paraphrase of Plato's *Republic* by faithfully reiterating al-Fārābī's definition of the *'ilm al-madani*. Thus, he explains that civil science is made up of two parts: a theoretical side that deals with abstract ethical knowledge and a practical side concerned with the application of this moral insight. These two parts, Ibn Rushd assures us,

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<sup>236</sup> Ibn Bājja, *La Conduite de l'isolé et deux autres épîtres*, ed. C. Genequand, J. Vrin, Paris 2010, pp. 123-124, 127-128, 176-78.

correspond to the two main components of medical science. The first ethical part is equivalent to theoretical medicine and the second part tallies with clinical practice<sup>237</sup>. Similarly, Ibn Rushd compares the proficient statesman to the expert physician. He claims, in typically Farabian fashion, that both figures become masters of their trade by seamlessly combining their empirical and theoretical knowledge<sup>238</sup>. This line of thought helps explain why in the closing portion of the *Faṣl al-Maqāl*, Ibn Rushd confidently affirms that the analogy between the craft of the physician and that of the lawgiver is apodictic and not merely illustrative or conveniently rhetorical<sup>239</sup>.

The Farabian conception of a therapeutic civil science aimed at establishing political health and warding off political corruption is also found in the works of Maimonides, Ibn Falaquera, Ibn Laṭīf and other Medieval and Renaissance Jewish philosophers<sup>240</sup>. As a matter of fact, the best illustration of the pervasive influence of al-Fārābī's understanding of the *'ilm al-madani* comes under the pen of Samuel Ben Judah of Marseille<sup>241</sup>. The author of the Hebrew version of Ibn Rushd's paraphrase of Plato's *Republic* makes a number of interesting remarks in his colophon but none is as revealing as his unequivocal acceptance of al-Fārābī's division of the *'ilm al-madani* into a

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<sup>237</sup> R. Lerner, *Averroes on Plato's Republic* cit., pp. 3-4.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>239</sup> Ibn Rushd, *The Decisive Treatise and Epistle Dedicatory*, ed. trans. C. E. Butterworth, Brigham Young University Press, Provo 2001, pp. 23-24.

<sup>240</sup> For Maimonides see, L. V. Berman, *Maimonides, the Disciple of Alfarabi*, "Israel Oriental Studies" 4, 1974, pp. 154-178, and H. Kreisel, *Maimonides' Political Philosophy*, in *The Cambridge Companion to Maimonides*, ed. K. Seeskin, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2005, pp. 193-220. See also, R. Brague, *Maimonide: Traité de Logique*, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris 1996. For al-Fārābī's impact on Jewish philosophy see, A. Melamed, *The Philosopher-King* cit., pp. 13-23, 93-111. See also, S. Harvey, *Falaquera's Alfarabi: An Example of the Judaization of the Islamic Falāsifah*, "Trumah", 12, 2002, pp. 97-112. B. Chiesa, *Note su al-Farabi, Averroè e Ibn Bagga nella tradizione ebraica*, "Henoch", 8, 1986, pp. 79-86. M. Zonta, *Influence of Arabic and Islamic Philosophy on Judaic Thought*, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2011 Edition)*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2011/entries/arabic-islamic-judaic/>>.

<sup>241</sup> For a brief sketch of Samuel Ben Judah's life and work see, L. V. Berman, *Greek into Hebrew: Samuel Ben Judah of Marseilles, Fourteenth Century Philosopher and Translator in Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. A. Altmann, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1967, pp. 289-320.



theoretical moral part and an applied political section<sup>242</sup>. In fact, Ben Judah apologizes for his inability to offer a complete discussion of this science but his unfortunate incarceration in the south of France at the Chateau of Beaucaire prevented him from carrying out his plans. Indeed, his initial intention was to supply the reader with a comprehensive exposition of the *'ilm al-madanī*, which would also have included (as a treatment of the first part of this science) a translation of al-Fārābī's commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Regrettably, Samuel Ben Judah could never bring this project to fruition.

A major reason for the wide and sustained appeal of the Farabian account of civil science in the Medieval period was the intimate way his position linked political issues with the cosmic theme of divine providence. Indeed, as al-Fārābī repeatedly reminds us, the nature of human flourishing depends on the benevolent structure of the universe. Thus, in his synoptic presentation of Aristotelian philosophy, the *Falsafat Aristūṭālīs*, he affirms that in order to understand the proper function and rank (*rutba*) of mankind, we first need to grasp the broader arrangement of the world<sup>243</sup>. In keeping with this recommendation, al-Fārābī famously dedicates the first half of the *Arā' Ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila* and the *Siyāsa al-Madaniyya* to a detailed description of the graded structure of the universe before embarking, in the later chapters, on an analysis of the various political regimes<sup>244</sup>. In so doing, he is able to contextualize his investigation of the ideal and non-ideal commonwealths and rulers within a much larger metaphysical and physical

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<sup>242</sup> Samuel Ben Judah's colophon is translated by Ralph Lerner in the appendix of his *Averroes on Plato's Republic* cit., pp. 153-157. The original Hebrew text is available in E. I. J. Rosenthal, *Averroes's Commentary on Plato's Republic*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1956, pp. 106-107.

<sup>243</sup> Fārābī, *Falsafat Aristūṭālīs* cit., pp. 68-69.

<sup>244</sup> On the structure of al-Fārābī's chief political work see, U. Rudolph, *Reflections on al-Fārābī's Mabādī' āra' ahl al-madīna al-fāḍila*, in *In the Age of al-Fārābī: Arabic Philosophy in Fourth/Tenth Century*, ed. P. Adamson, Warburg Institute, London 2008, pp. 1-14. On the theme of the interaction between the study of physics and ethics see, R. Brague, *Is Physics Interesting? Some Late Ancient and Medieval Answers*. "Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal", 23, 2002, pp.183-201.

framework<sup>245</sup>. As a result, al-Fārābī offers a comprehensive yardstick by which to judge a community's progress towards felicity. If, as we have seen, the institutions and leadership of a polity are virtuous then its perfect order will reflect the stratified organization of the body and cosmos. If, on the other hand, they are vicious, then the arrangement of the city will be haphazard and chaotic. Its various offices, starting with the highest one, will be filled with individuals that are not endowed with the appropriate dispositions; consequently the communal striving of its inhabitants will be directed at an assortment of fleeting desires and capricious pleasures. The whole structure of this dominion will be dissonant, bringing about, more often than not, civil discord and upheaval. This disharmony and the ultimate demise of this polity will be a testament to its inhabitants' failure to recognize, understand and reliably abide by the providential justice of the cosmos.

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<sup>245</sup> For a discussion of this problem see, M. Maḥdī, *Alfarabi and the Foundation of Islamic Political Philosophy* cit., pp. 56-60, 78-88, 118-121. See as well, M. Galston, *The Theoretical and Practical Dimensions of Happiness as Portrayed in the Political Treatises of al-Fārābī*, in *The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy: Essays in Honor of Muḥsin S. Maḥdī*, ed. C. E. Butterworth, The Center for Middle Eastern Studies of Harvard University, Cambridge 1992, pp. 95-151. See also by the same author *Politics and Excellence* cit., pp. 180-221. For a rebuttal of M. Galston's position see, H. Zghal, *Métaphysique et science politique* cit., pp.169-194.

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